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A Study Of Adult Students Enrolled In Off-Campus Classes

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Educational Psychology and Guidance](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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A STUDY OF ADULT STUDENTS ENROLLED
IN OFF-CAMPUS CLASSES

SCHROCK

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~~A Study of Adult Students Enrolled~~

in Off-Campus Classes

(TITLE)

BY

Margaret A. Schrock

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist in Education

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1988
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

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A Study of Adult Students Enrolled
in Off-Campus Classes

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B.S. University of Illinois 1976

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Specialist in Education at the Graduate
School of Eastern Illinois University

Charleston, IL

1988

ABSTRACT

The number of adult students in higher education has been continually increasing. As they enter colleges and universities, they bring goals, perspectives, learning needs, and backgrounds different from those of traditional aged college students. To serve the needs of the growing population of adult students, adult educators in higher education must understand the perceived needs of adult students.

The purpose of this study was to obtain information from adult students enrolled in off-campus classes of Eastern Illinois University (EIU). This survey focused on evaluation of current off-campus programs and needs assessment to discover what changes off-campus students desired. Data were used by Adult and Continuing Education Programs of EIU for program planning.

A survey was distributed to adult students (n=644) attending EIU off-campus classes during Spring 1988 semester. A total of 545 surveys were completed by both undergraduate and graduate adult students attending classes meeting at off-campus locations. Tabulated responses were reported; conclusions and recommendations were made based on the results of the survey.

EIU off-campus adult students had definite educational goals. Earning a degree was a very important motivation for educational participation as were other

career-related incentives. Overall the respondents expressed satisfaction with the current off-campus program. Location was particularly important to these students. EIU off-campus adult students expressed a desire for more classes to be offered off-campus and a need for more information to be available to them. They were favorable toward classes scheduled on Saturday mornings. They responded they would use career planning services if such programs were offered off-campus.

The study includes a literature review of adult students in higher education and a copy of the survey instrument.

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I thank: Dr. Gary Foster for introducing me to Dillman's (1979) work on survey design and analysis. Dr. Herb Bartling for his suggestions on survey construction. Mr. Don McKee for his ideas in survey revision, and continued interest and practical assistance throughout the project. Mr. Don Armel for designing the front cover and professional layout of the survey instrument for reproduction. Ms. Shirley Karriker for her expert advice and help with SPSS.

Finally, I thank: My family for supporting my decision to pursue my graduate degree as an adult student.

"Whatsoever you do,
Do all to the glory of God."

I Corinthians 10:31

"Unless the Lord builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;"

Psalms 127:1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	v.
CHAPTER	
I. OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Purpose.....	3
Definition of Terms	4
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	6
Growing Number of Adult Students.....	6
History of Adult Students.....	7
Definition of Adult Students.....	10
Characteristics of Adult Students.....	12
Learning Needs of Adult Students.....	14
Adults Participation in Education.....	20
Barriers Faced by Adult Students.....	27
Summary.....	29
III. RESEARCH PROCEDURE.....	30
General Design of the Study.....	30
Population and Sample.....	30
Instrumentation.....	31
Data Collection.....	33
Data Analysis.....	34
IV. RESULTS.....	35
V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	59

REFERENCES.....	68
APPENDIXES.....	74

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1 Reasons Considered by Adult Students for Returning to College.....	36
Table 2 Importance Ranking of Reasons Adults Return to College.....	38
Table 3 Educational Goals Adult Students Hope to Achieve in Five Years.....	39
Table 4 Adult Student Enrollment in Educational Programs.....	40
Table 5 Factors Influencing Adult Students' Decision to Enroll at EIU.....	41
Table 6 Sources of Initial Information About EIU Off-Campus Classes.....	43
Table 7 Adult Students' Evaluation of Various Aspects of Off-Campus Programs.....	44
Table 8 Adult Student Enrollment at Off-Campus Locations.....	46
Table 9 Distance Adult Students Commute and Are Willing to Commute to Class.....	47
Table 10 Adult Students' Best Times for Class Meetings... ..	49
Table 11 Interest in Classes Scheduled During the Weekend.....	50

Table 12	Importance of Offering Additional Classes in Various Subjects.....	52
Table 13	Anticipated Uses of Additional Services for Adult Students.....	54
Table 14	Employment Status of Adult Students.....	55
Table 15	Major Source of Financing Education.....	56

CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

"Adult learners constitute the most rapidly growing segment of American education... Adults [are] going back to school in ever larger numbers.... Adult learning is a social phenomena of substantial proportions" (Cross, 1980, p.75). Over the past 15 to 20 years, growing numbers of adult students have enrolled in colleges and universities. Between 1978 to 1984, enrollments in adult education courses rose nearly 50%, from 28.1 million to 43.1 million (Studies Show, 1987). In 1987, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported the following concerning the findings of a nation-wide survey conducted by the College Board:

...there are 6 million adult students who study for college credit every year and that 45 percent of all undergraduate and graduate students are now over 25. Within the next decade, the College Board predicted, that figure could rise to 50 percent. (Hirschorn, p. A35).

Echoing these predictions, the U. S. Census Bureau of Statistics estimates that by 1992 50% of all college students nation-wide will be non-traditional students

(Bloomer, 1987). "Lifelong learning is here today for about half of the American adult population--ready or not." (Hodgkinson, 1985).

Adult students returning to higher education present a challenge to colleges and universities. Since adult students' characteristics differ from those of traditional students, they have different educational needs. Many institutions of higher education are committed to community service, and therefore desire to meet these needs. Such a commitment is found in Eastern Illinois University's (EIU) Mission and Goals Statement: "The University is committed to adult and continuing education, including off-campus courses and programs to meet the educational needs of business, industry, governmental agencies, and individual citizens in its service region." As one of the primary mechanisms for accomplishing this task, Adult and Continuing Education Programs at EIU wanted to know how well they were doing this job in off-campus classes, and what program elements could be changed to do a better job of serving the needs of adult students. Adult and Continuing Education Programs is an administrative unit through which the continuing education functions are developed, coordinated, supported, and directed.

Statement of Purpose

This study was conducted to gather information from adult students enrolled in EIU off-campus classes in order to provide better service to these students. This survey gathered information to answer the following questions: How well do existing services meet needs--i.e., how do current students evaluate educational services? and, What changes will make the educational services better?

Specifically, the study was designed to:

- 1) determine the reasons adult students decided to attend college.
- 2) determine what characteristics of EIU attracted current adult students to choose EIU and by what means they learned of EIU.
- 3) collect adult students' perceptions of and attitudes towards programs, facilities, and services currently offered by EIU at off-campus locations.
- 4) investigate adult students' opinions concerning current class sites and possible alternate sites
- 5) investigate adult students' opinions concerning current time schedules and possible alternate times.
- 6) determine the desire for additional courses to be offered off-campus.

7) gather adult students' perceptions of additional services they would use if available.

8) collect some basic demographic data which could be used in conjunction with other available data.

This study was done in cooperation with Adult and Continuing Education Programs of EIU as the first study of adult students enrolled in EIU off-campus classes. Information obtained from this study was valuable in program evaluation and program planning.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions of terms were stipulated.

Adult students --In this study, students enrolled in off-campus classes were considered adult students because of the following characteristics: 1) age--95.6% were over age 25; 2) place of residence--not living in campus residence halls; 3) adult responsibilities--86.4% were employed. A full explanation of the factors involved in determining adult students is discussed on page 10.

Off-campus classes --Off-campus classes are credit courses which met at a location other than EIU's Charleston campus. During the Spring semester 1988, classes were held at ten off-campus locations. This included both regular and contract classes.

BOG and BOSCO Two non-traditional undergraduate degree programs offered at EIU are the Board of Governors Bachelor of Arts degree (BOG) and the Bachelor of Science Career Occupations (BOSCO). Both are designed for adult students and allow them to earn college credit for life experiences.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent research reports a growing number of adult students in higher education. This literature review provides information on the history, learning needs, characteristics, participation, and barriers encountered by adult students when they return to institutions of higher education.

The Growing Number of Adult Students

Adults Returning to College

During the past fifteen years, the student population in higher education has been changing. Traditionally, high school graduates went directly on to college making typical college students 18-24 years old, attending classes full-time, and living on-campus in campus housing. These changes are occurring because the size of the high school graduating classes is decreasing and at the same time the number of non-traditional students is growing. Traditional students are still the majority student population; their number increased by 23% from 1972-1982. However, during the same time period, students age 25-34 increased almost 70%, and students over age 35 increased 77%. During the same 10 year period, the number of part-time students increased 65%. In 1982, traditional

students made up 62% of the total college enrollment (Moore, 1986). However, in view of the fast growth of the number of part-time adult students, some researchers estimate that in five years there will be as many part-time as full-time students and that by 1992 almost half of all students will be over 25 years old (Shannon, 1986).

The Challenge of Adult Students

Over the past thirty years, colleges and universities have experienced fluctuations in student enrollment. First, due to the "baby boom" and changing admissions policies, the number of students increased. New institutions opened and many existing ones expanded. However, now the number of students is leveling off and declining. In addition, annual budget increases have often been below the inflation rate. These changes have produced a "crisis" situation in higher education, which prompts educators and administrators to look for solutions (Knapper & Cropley, 1985).

After several years of ignoring adult education as a peripheral activity, U. S. colleges and universities have begun to view adult students as a solution to the problem of declining enrollments and the resulting loss of money. Since the 1981 peak, the number of 18-24 year-olds has continued to fall; by 1990 their number is projected to decline by five million. Adults are now the "new market"

for higher education (Knapper & Cropley, 1985). "Escaping the destiny of demographics for many institutions means marketing successfully to adults. The traditional-age population of 18-22 year-olds must be supplemented by the new older learners or enrollments will decline." (Talbert, 1987, p.8).

In the face of declining enrollments, educators must guard against the "bucks and bodies" trap which views adult education as a way to bring in people and money to finance something else considered more important. To avoid this, the value of lifelong education must be understood and accepted by faculty and administration (Fey, 1987). The increased number of non-traditional students brings a

challenge ... for colleges and universities to accept a role educating a maturing population. That is, to discard the notion that the "older student" is a "warm body" and generally not [a] student in a real sense It is ... accepting the legitimate demand for a quality education by the older part-time student.

(Shannon, 1986, p.8)

Changes in society which affect individuals and impact the future have implications for education. The concept of lifelong learning proposes a way to meet the needs of an aging population in a changing society. However, to embrace lifelong learning means more than recruiting adult

students to fill spaces vacated by 18-22 year-old students. It means changing opinions about the value of adult education--no longer as an extra nicety, but as a necessity for the individual and society.

Hodgkinson (1983) made the following observations: Today, about 12 million people attend colleges and universities in the U. S.. However, another 46 million adults are being educated by another service provider. ... further education has basically gone around colleges and universities; we have now built a "second system" of post-secondary education in the U. S. ... If higher education institutions want to become more active in the adult education area, they will have to modify their existing practices....

(p.10 &11)

To attract adult students, higher education must adjust to needs, schedules, and lifestyles of these students.

(Bloomer, 1987)

History of Adult Students

The first major influx of adult students in higher education was in the 1940s when veterans on the GI Bill returned to college. In 1945-1946, 27.6% of the total undergraduate enrollment was veterans who were older than the traditional 18-21 year olds. In the 1960s-1970s, females over age 25 were the largest segment of the growing population of adult students. Since the 1970s

there has been a continuous increase in the number of adult females in higher education (Huey-Li, 1986). Currently, 36% of college students are over 25 and the average age of students continues to rise (Young, 1984). The number of adults participating in education will continue to grow as long as the general U. S. adult median age rises, age discrimination is challenged, new job skills and knowledge are needed, new job opportunities open for women and minorities, and the education level of the population continues to increase (Cross, 1980).

Definition of Adult Student

Defining the adult student is an "ever-increasing ambiguity" (Hughes, 1983, p.51). First, there are multiple terms in use, such as adult students, returning students, adult learners, older students, non-traditional students, stop-outs, and reentry students. Often age is used as the sole determining criterion. However, a specific age criterion is not agreed upon--various breaks between 22 and 30 are used by various researchers as the cut-off age for adult students (Hughes, 1983). Other factors such as marital status, place of residence, and academic load also seem to be important.

Bean and Metzner (1985) formulated a definition of non-traditional students using three factors: age, time spent in school activities versus time spent in non-school responsibilities and activities, and place of residence.

These researchers began by defining a traditional student as 18-24, full-time, and residing on campus. They then postulated that a non-traditional student must lack one or more of these characteristics. However, just lacking one of these characteristics may not be sufficient to cause enough difference for a student to be considered non-traditional. These researchers concluded that socialization was the main difference between traditional and non-traditional students. College is a major socialization force in the lives of traditional college students, but not so for non-traditional students. Traditional students spend most of their time on campus interacting with faculty and peers who are the primary agents of socialization. Non-traditional students spend much less time on campus reducing collegiate influence, while spending more time off-campus with other socializing influences. For traditional students, both academic and social factors are important reasons for attending college. For non-traditional students academic reasons alone are paramount. Therefore, Bean and Metzner (1985) proposed the following definition:

a non-traditional student is older than 24, or does not live in a campus residence (e.g. is a commuter), or is a part-time student, or some combination of these three factors; is not greatly influenced by the social environment of the institution; [and] is

chiefly concerned with the institution's academic offerings (especially courses, certification and degrees). (p.489)

Characteristics of Adult Students

Adult students are not a single population, but are a heterogeneous group. Therefore, it is difficult to think of them in general terms. Adult students have a variety of attitudes, interests, values, expectations, and motivations. They have numerous reasons for returning to school--career advancement, self fulfillment, and personal satisfaction. According to adult development theory, adults pass through a "range of age-linked life stages that suggest the existence of a different set of needs, goals and foci for each stage." (Hughes, 1983, p.52).

Researchers have attempted to discover some general characteristics of adult students to understand who they are and what they need. Richter-Antion (1986) published a report giving eight major characteristics of adult learners.

(1) Adult learners are evenly divided, male and female. (However, Iovacchini, et al., (1985) reported that there were more adult female students than male students and that female students tended to be older than male students. Cross (1980) also reported slightly more female than male students.)

(2) Adult learners tend to be less than 35 years old, but at the same time the greatest percent of increase is among adult learners 55 years old and older. (Cross (1980) supported and elaborated on this when she reported that most adult students were 25-34 years old.)

(3) Adult learners are more likely to be Caucasian than of a minority race.

(4) Adult learners are more likely to be single than married. (Iovacchini, et al., (1985) found that there is a higher divorce and/or separation rate among adult students than traditional students and more often they have children. Crimmins and Riddler (1985) found that the percent of unmarried women over 35 who were students was continuously increasing; and that divorced women over 35 who were heading households showed high participation in educational activities.)

(5) Adult learners were generally employed full time and generally working in business, or a professional or technical field. (Iovacchini, et al. (1985) concurred when he reported that 64% of the adult students he surveyed were employed with an average of 33 hours per week of work. Also, Cross (1980) found that most adult students work 35 or more hours per week.)

(6) Adult learners generally have an annual family income of \$10,000 or more.

(7) Adult learners generally have had previous higher education, indicating that getting education tends to cause a person to desire more education.

(8) Adult learners are often involved in career related education.

Cross (1980) listed one additional significant characteristic to the above:

(9) Adult students generally pay for their education from their own funds.

Learning Needs of Adult Students

Adult students have substantially different learning needs than do traditional students. Adult learning ability has been debated for years, some claiming that learning ability does not decline with age, while others claim that it does. There are clear differences between the performance of learning tasks by older and younger adults. However, it is not clear whether these differences are due to a change in learning ability or if they reflect changes in interest, motivation, or other factors (Knapper & Cropley, 1985).

Research suggests that adults approach the learning process differently than do younger students. This too has been debated. Some claim that there is no evidence to support that the learning process is different in adults than in children; however, others accept these differences to be real (Cross, 1984). Based on these differences, a

concept of a unified theory of adult learning has emerged. This theory has been called andragogy, the art and science of teaching adults, to differentiate it from the theory of youth learning called pedagogy, the art and science of teaching children.

The concept and term andragogy was first introduced in the United States in 1968 by Knowles' article in Adult Leadership, "Andragogy, Not Pedagogy." However, the term was first coined in 1833 by a German grammar school teacher, Alexander Kapp, to refer to Plato's educational theory. It was used to refer to adult education in 1921 and was first published in European literature in the 1950s.

Shortly after World War I, educators from both the U.S. and Europe began emerging with ideas about the unique characteristics of adults as learners. In 1926, E.C. Lindeman in The Meaning of Adult Education laid the foundation of adult learning theory which is still the foundation today. Lindeman wrote, "I am conceiving adult education in terms of a new technique for learning, a technique as essential to the college graduate as to the unlettered manual worker." (Knowles, 1978, p.26). His five foundations for educating adults were: 1) needs and interests define the starting point, 2) learner experience is very important, 3) learners need to be self-directing, 4) content needs to be life-centered rather

than subject-centered, and 5) educators must recognize differences among adult learners. For Knowles andragogy was a concept around which he could organize "what we know about the unique characteristics of adult learners." (Knowles, 1978, p.51). The differences between pedagogy and andragogy lie in the assumptions which are made about learners. These assumptions can be summarized as follows:

<u>PEDAGOGY</u>	<u>ANDRAGOGY</u>
IMMATURE CHILD	MATURE ADULT
1. total dependency	self directing
2. inexperienced	rich reservoir of experiences
3. self identity in externals	self identity defined by experience
4. readiness to learn stems from biological development and academic pressure "ought to"	readiness to learn stems from developmental tasks required to perform changing roles "need to"
5. subject-centered postponed application	problem-centered current application

(Knowles, 1978)

Adult learner characteristics reported in the literature describe the ways adults differ from children, thereby supporting the assumptions of andragogy. For example, Knapper & Cropley (1985) reported that adult students desire to learn what they define as worthwhile rather than what others consider important, and generally adult students have a low regard for abstract information.

Hughes (1983) stated that adult students use their life experiences as a frame of reference, they want to apply their learning now rather than later, and they have a desire for practical and tangible learning. Consequently, adult students prefer informal learning rather than lectures, instructors who are relaxed, and grading which is based on criteria other than tests. Cross (1980) observed that overall young people learn what they are told to learn, but adults learn for a purpose that is clear to themselves. Adults are highly pragmatic learners--desiring knowledge of how to do something. Raines (1986) noted that adult students often want to link new knowledge with what they already know; and they want education to be very practical and application oriented. Richter-Antion (1986) reported that with increased age and life experiences, adults develop a different perspective of life and education. This different view point often leads to more active participation in class discussions, less blind acceptance of presented material, and more challenge to instructors. Adult students possess a high level of commitment and are active learners because they attend school by personal choice, not due to parental or social pressure as may be the case with younger students. As Huey-Li (1986) stated, adult students are highly motivated.

Entering college is a transition for adult students because they change from being a citizen in the "real" world to being a student. Change involves uncertainty and risk. Often adult students lack confidence in their ability to learn and study, have rusty academic skills, lack understanding of the purposes and structure of higher education, and may feel like strangers who don't belong in a new world (Steltenpohl & Shipton, 1986).

Knapper and Cropley (1985) also mentioned that adult students frequently underestimate their ability to learn and may have previous negative educational experiences to overcome. This idea was also reflected by Huey-Li (1986) who stated that adult students may not be prepared for self-directed learning but may need to be reoriented to learning activities. Therefore, adults need to feel accepted, respected, and supported. They want to be mutual inquirers with their instructors. Richter-Antion (1986) noted that adult students may face added stress and social pressure because they are past the socially acceptable time for going to school. Knapper and Cropley (1985) reported that adult students tend to be sensitive to social factors such as being made to look foolish. They also disliked being treated in ways appropriate for children and adolescents rather than as adults.

Since adult students span a wide age range, individuals are going through various stages of adult development and

facing different life crises. Unlike traditional students, who are in the same age group and going through the same developmental stage together, adult students are usually alone in their developmental stage (Richter-Antion, 1986). Therefore, adult development theory can provide a framework for better understanding adult students and for establishing a response to their needs (Hughes, 1983). Adult development theory asserts that adulthood entails a continual process of development. As development occurs, adults change views of the world and beliefs resulting in a change of acting and being (Tarule, 1980). Tarule and Weathersby (1979) stated:

...adults are developing people Both the content and process of ... education promote development. An active focus on self-chosen learning and the acquisition of new capacities and insights lead almost inescapably to a reorganized relationship with one's self and the world. (p.12)

The learning process is not just additive but qualitative because it transforms perspectives. Adults at different life stages have different developmental tasks and issues which cause them to have various reasons for enrolling and various perceptions of education. "The same educational program will be experienced differently by adults at different life stages because of the different perspectives and priorities these stages embody."

(Weathersby, 1980, p.10). Adult students present a challenge to educators to create settings that support individual development at the various developmental stages.

Adults Participation in Education
Characteristics and Participation

Cross (1980) examined several characteristics of adult students including age, ethnic group, sex, educational attainment, income, and place of residence to discover how these related to educational participation.

Cross found that age was related to the level of participation, the interest in education, the reasons for participation, and the barriers to participation. Participation in educational activities begins to decline in the early 30s and sharply declines after age 55. Of adults surveyed, 74% age 35-54 indicated an interest in education; but only 58% age 55 and over indicated an interest. Adult students age 25-44 were interested in education to gain credentials and lay a groundwork for a career; and adult students over 50 were preparing for leisure activities. Age was a deterrent for 15-25% of adults surveyed who said they were "too old" or they lacked mobility.

Cross stated that educational needs differed greatly among ethnic groups. A comparison of educational

participation by white and black adults showed that in 1969, 7.7% of black adults and 10.2% of white adults participated in educational activities; and in 1975, 6.9% of black adults and 12.1% of white adults participated in educational activities. During these six years, participation of white adults increased about three times faster than the increase in population, whereas black participation did not keep pace with the increasing black population. However, when educational attainment was equated, participation was roughly equal. Well established socioeconomic indicators such as low educational attainment, low job status, and low income are related to low educational participation.

Cross reported that a 1974 study by the Commission on Non-Traditional Studies found that participation in educational activities was the same for males as females-- 51% female and 49% male when viewed nationally. In state and regional studies, differences were found. However, as the number of female students steadily increases while the number of male students remains fairly stable, women are overtaking men in educational participation.

Cross determined that educational attainment was the single best indicator of interests, motivations, and participation of adult learners. The more education adults had the more interested they were in further education, the more they participate in educational

activities, and the more they demand of state and federal planners. She supported this characteristic with data from a California study which reported that of adults who had attended but not graduated from high school, 35% expressed interest in further education, compared to 53% of those who had graduated from high school and 73% of those who had graduated from college. Those with college background wanted lectures, workshops, and television courses. High school graduates favored on-the-job training and correspondence courses.

When investigating the influence of income level, Cross found that cost was frequently mentioned as a barrier to participation in educational activities. Participation rates increase steadily with increasing income--4.4% of adults participating in educational activities had an income of under \$3,000 whereas 17.7% of participating adults had an income greater than \$25,000. However, when age and educational attainment were controlled, income had little influence.

Cross found that both regional and local place of residence had an influence on the level of educational participation. On the whole, the Western U.S. had greater interest, participation, and opportunity for adult education than other regions of the U. S.. Surveys indicate that 59% of the adults in California were interested in education while in Iowa only 36% of adults

were interested. Locally, suburban adults were more likely to participate in educational activities than were adults living in rural or central city areas. These findings seemed related to the proximity of a college to the residence of these adults.

Change and Participation

Researchers have found that among adults, learning experiences are often linked with life changes and career transitions. Raines (1986) reported the following:

...a number of changes trigger adults to begin a learning experience; among these life changes are the birth of a baby, being fired, joining the army, and being divorced. Such a trigger event means that the person feels that he or she has been in a certain status which then has been changed. For example, one might be in a nonmanagerial position be promoted to a managerial position and then need education to feel like a manager A life change can create a "teachable moment." (p.2)

Adult learning experiences were linked to career transition in four studies. First, in an ongoing study since 1981 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Eversoll (1986) reported the reasons given by baccalaureate graduates over the age of 30 for obtaining their degree. The reasons stated were career change (27.68%), to begin a career (28.57%), professional development within a career

(27.68%), and personal development (14.29%). This reflects that the majority of non-traditional students are learning for career related reasons. Second, Iovacchini et.al. (1985) found in a survey of students at an urban Southeastern university that most non-traditional students in degree programs were studying to advance to a higher occupational level (whereas those in non-degree programs stated their reason for going to school was to become a better educated person). Third, a survey done each spring among students at California State University revealed that students over age 25 ranked career preparation or job enhancement as their highest educational goal (Shannon, 1986). Fourth, Arbieter (1978) reported a 1978 survey which indicated that one common step taken by adults in career transition was educational enrollment; and most adults in career transition planned to get additional education to earn the credentials they needed.

It is important to understand the motives that adults have for being involved in educational activities. Cross (1980) found the following six motives from her synthesis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):

- (1) to achieve practical goals such as obtaining a new job, advancing in a present job, and improving income

level. Education was seen as a route to upward socioeconomic mobility.

(2) to achieve personal satisfaction or other personal goals.

(3) to gain new knowledge. This was seen as a very socially acceptable motive.

(4) to achieve formal educational goals such as earning a degree or gaining certification.

(5) to socialize with others and to escape their routine.

(6) to achieve societal goals in order to become better citizens.

Cross (1980) stated that motives were related to age. Younger adult students desired to lay a foundation for the future, middle age adult students desired to advance in their career, and older adult students desired to learn leisure time activities, gain personal satisfaction, and find social and personal stimulation.

Similarly, Weathersby (1980) related reasons adults enroll in educational activities to stages of adult development. She found differing reasons typical to differing age groups.

During the twenties, when the individual enters the adult world characteristic reasons for enrolling were the following: Completing 'unfinished business'

... Furthering career goals; gaining needed credentials

Responses typical of the reasons for enrolling given by adults at the so-called thirties transition were: Setting new goals ... need for redirection in work and perhaps personal life ... seeking self-identity, and personal growth ... Seeking professional advancement

Adult students in their thirties and forties, when individuals settle down and become their own person, gave reasons for enrolling which reveal an acceleration toward long-term goals and enjoyment of opportunities for personal and intellectual satisfactions: Pursuing long-term goals ... exploring personal interests ... Combining study with family

At the mid-life transition in the early forties, reasons for enrolling were related to work, self, and changed family circumstances: Finding meaningful work in changed life circumstances ... Realizing a long-deferred dream ... Exploring one's identity

At the fifties transition, the reasons given for returning to college were: Regaining direction after crisis and personal upheaval ... Starting some new work; ... 'my last chance to have a career!' ... Pursuing long-valued interests and goals

And at the restabilization, mellowing, and flowering stage of later adulthood, personally valued goals appear to motivate enrollment: Need for knowledge and authority to pursue self-defined work and new goals. (p. 9-22)

Barriers Faced by Adult Students

Adult students who return to institutions of higher education often face barriers. Currently, institutions are becoming increasingly sensitive to these and are attempting to reduce them. However, some institutions remain insensitive. Copeland-Wood (1986) described the situation of the adult student as follows:

...older students who commute to primarily residential campuses often are ignored with regard to their needs, their development and their persistence toward degree completion. Commuter students are often invisible because studies of student development focuses on residential students On campuses which generally serve the 18-22 year old traditional student, a possible prejudice exists about the authenticity of older students as "real students." (p. 27)

Both Cross (1980) and Iovacchini et. al. (1985) reported three classifications of barriers to higher education faced by adult students.

(1) Situational barriers are barriers arising out of the student's situation in life. They can be the cost of education or the conflict between job and family responsibilities and school. These barriers are reported as deterrents by the largest number of adults. Time constraints deter 20-50%, difficulties with child care deter 10-20%, cost of education deters 33%, and transportation problems deter the rural and elderly.

(2) Institutional barriers are college practices and procedures primarily designed for traditional students rather than non-traditional students. This is cited as a problem by 25% of adult students. There are five categories of institutional barriers: (a) scheduling-- courses scheduled at times which conflict with adult work schedules, (b) location and transportation, (c) course content, (d) procedural "red tape" such as admission forms, procedures, and requirements which are impractical for adults, and (e) lack of information.

(3) Dispositional barriers are the attitudes that adult students hold about themselves as learners. This includes poor study skills, low self esteem, lack of energy, or fear of going back to college. These are not socially acceptable, therefore less than 10% mentioned them as barriers.

Burke (1987) supported the existence of these barriers and the need for higher education to address them when she

described a program for adult students which successfully dealt with these obstacles. She included all three categories of barriers in the frustrations she identified: (a) lack of programs which fit busy schedules, (b) inappropriate admissions standards, (c) psychological factors contributing to feeling threatened, and (d) emotional conflicts dealing with family responsibilities and changing roles.

Summary

The number of adult students in higher education continues to increase. In light of declining enrollments, this presents opportunity and challenge. Because adult students are a heterogeneous group, they have a variety of motivations and unique learning needs and characteristics. Adults' return to higher education is often associated with transition and change--especially career change. Adult students face situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers which impede educational progress. To attract and retain adult students, their characteristics and needs must be understood and considered in program planning and barriers must be reduced.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

General Design of the Study

The focus of this study was conducting a survey to learn adult students' perceptions of the existing off-campus programs and of changes which could improve the program. The survey was designed to evaluate current services and programs provided off-campus and to provide needs assessment information for future planning.

Population and Sample

The population studied was adult students enrolled in EIU off-campus classes. During Spring 1988 semester there were 887 students enrolled in ten off-campus locations. For distribution purposes, only students attending classes which met throughout the months of March to May 1988 were surveyed. This resulted in a sample of 644 adult students attending seven off-campus locations. Records at Adult and Continuing Education Programs gave the following profile of students enrolled in off-campus classes during that semester:

40% male, 60% female (n=1020)

98.6% part-time, 1.3% full-time (n=517)

46.8% graduate, 53.4% undergraduate (n=1020)

95.6% over age 25, 4.4% under age 25 (n=270)

77.4% over age 30, 22.6% under age 30 (n=270)

90.6% white, 5.3% black, 4.1% other (n=619)

Instrumentation

Survey Development

A survey instrument was designed by the author following Dillman's Total Design Method (1978), incorporating ideas of Sudman and Bradburn (1983), DiSilvestro (1987), Smith (1985) and (Cross (1979). In addition, examples of surveys conducted by LaCalle (1981) and Piatt & Seybert (1981) were used as guides in the construction of the final instrument.

Pretesting

The final draft of the survey was pretested by having a class of five adult students complete the questionnaire. At this time, particular interest was given to the time required to complete the survey and to the clarity of the questions. In pretesting, students required 9-12 minutes to complete the survey. Comments indicated that questions were clear and computer column numbers caused no distraction or confusion.

The survey entitled "EIU Off-Campus Education: Looking Toward the Future", was in booklet form with the EIU logo and the Adult and Continuing Education Programs logo on the front cover (Appendix A). The four page booklet measured 8 1/2" by 5 1/2" (half of a standard 8 1/2" by 11" sheet of paper). The first page of the survey

booklet was a letter from the Dean of Adult and Continuing Education Programs explaining the purpose of the study, thanking the students for their help, and giving instructions for completion of the survey.

The survey instrument (Appendix A) was divided into sections as follows to answer the research questions listed:

I. Deciding to Attend College Why do these adult students enroll in college classes? What do they want to gain? What are their educational goals?

II. Deciding to Attend EIU What attracted these adult students to EIU? How did they find out about EIU extension classes?

III. Current Extension Programs How do current adult students rate off-campus programs? How are current locations for holding class? What other locations might be considered? What scheduling changes would improve the program? What additional courses were desired? This section was the central part of the questionnaire. It was not designed to evaluate teacher performance or course content since that was the responsibility of individual departments.

IV. Additional Services Desired by Adult Students What services would adult students use if they were available?

V. Student Information The student information section was designed to collect demographic data for comparative and descriptive purposes.

VI. Open ended Question A space was provided for students to make comments or give additional information which they wanted to share.

Data Collection

Surveys were distributed in fifty-two off-campus classes by the instructors. This method was selected for the opportunity to expand the sample size without incurring additional postage expense and to create a situation of accountability among class members completing the survey at the same time. However, it did make the return rate dependent upon instructor cooperation, and provided no way to contact students absent on the night of distribution. Instructors were mailed (campus mail or U. S. mail) envelopes containing surveys for their class(es) and a cover letter asking for cooperation and giving instructions for distribution (Appendix B & C). After completion, instructors were to return the surveys to Adult and Continuing Education Programs in the same envelope. Each survey was numbered and given a student name label to allow the researcher to record the return. By the end of the semester 42 of the 47 instructors had returned their packets. Out of 644 surveys distributed,

545 were returned completed and usable. This was a response rate of 84.6 %. Overall, the instructors were very cooperative, many very conscientiously, therefore a large percentage of surveys were returned. Thank you notes (Appendix D) were sent to all cooperating instructors at the end of the semester.

Data Analysis

The survey was designed for computer analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to provide frequency distributions for the survey variables. Each survey was analyzed by the researcher to record written suggestions and comments made by the respondents. The chi-square test was used to test the relationship between the surveyed group and the population of adult students attending off-campus classes.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Findings of the survey are reported following the sectional outline of the survey.

I. Deciding to Attend College

Section I of the survey focused on adult students' decisions to enroll in college and their personal educational goals. Career-related factors such as to prepare for a new career, to qualify for advancement, and to improve job skills, were each marked by over 50% of the adult students. However, to earn a degree was the reason most frequently cited (460, 84.4%). To satisfy personal interest, self enrichment was the second most frequently reported factor (440, 80.7%) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Reasons Considered by Adult Students for Returning to College

Reason	no.	%
<hr/>		
To prepare for a new career	304	55.8
To qualify for advancement in my present job	327	60.0
To improve skills in my present job	337	61.8
To earn a degree	460	84.4
To learn more about a new subject area	351	64.4
To meet new people	152	27.9
To challenge my ability to learn	346	63.5
To prepare for retirement	117	21.5
To satisfy personal interest, self enrichment	440	80.7

Career-related factors and to earn a degree were frequently indicated as one of the top three factors

considered by adult students when deciding to return to college. The three reasons indicated most frequently as the most important reasons for returning to college were: 1) to earn a degree (154, 28.3%), 2) to prepare for a new career (129, 23.7%), and 3) to qualify for advancement (113, 20.7%).

Reasons indicated most frequently as the second most important reason for returning to college were: 1) to earn a degree (114, 20.9%), 2) to qualify for advancement (88, 16.1%), 3) to improve skills in present job (80, 14.7%), and 4) to prepare for a new career (77, 14.1%). The two reasons indicated most often as the third most important reason for enrolling in college were: 1) to satisfy personal interest (110, 20.2%), and 2) to earn a degree (78, 14.3%) (see table 2).

Table 2

Importance Ranking of Reasons Adults Return to College

Reasons for Return	Levels of Importance					
	Most		Second		Third	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
To prepare for a new career	129	23.7	77	14.7	60	11
To qualify for advancement in my present job	113	20.7	88	16.1	36	6.6
To improve skills in my present job	38	7.0	80	14.7	61	11.2
To earn a degree	154	28.3	114	20.9	78	14.3
To learn more about a new subject area	14	26.0	29	5.3	51	9.4
To meet new people	2	.4	6	1.1	14	2.6
To challenge my ability to learn	8	1.5	37	6.8	62	11.4
To prepare for retirement	7	1.3	14	2.6	16	2.9
To satisfy personal interest, self enrichment	40	7.3	71	13.0	110	20.2

Over half (64.4%) of the surveyed students planned to complete graduate degrees. Most respondents (283, 51.9%) indicated they planned to complete a master's degree

within the next five years and 12.5% aspired to a higher degree. Another 116 (21.3%) planned to complete a bachelor's degree (see table 3).

Table 3

Educational Goals of Adult Students to Complete in Five Years

Goal	no.	%
Complete Bachelor's degree	116	21.3
Complete Master's degree	283	51.9
Complete Education Specialist	35	6.4
Study for a Doctorate	33	6.1
Not seeking a degree	26	4.8
Undecided	20	3.7
Other	10	1.8

Of the adult students surveyed, 206 (37.8%) were enrolled in a graduate degree program, while 198 (36.6%) were enrolled in one of the two non-traditional undergraduate degree programs (BOG and BOSCO) offered by EIU (see table 4).

Table 4

Adult Student Enrollment in Educational Programs

Program	no.	%
<hr/>		
BOG	96	17.6
BOSCO	102	18.7
Graduate degree	206	37.8
Non-degree undergraduate	6	1.1
Non-degree graduate	70	12.8
Other	51	9.4

II. Deciding to Attend Eastern Illinois University

Section II of the survey focused more specifically on the adults students' choice of EIU. Location of classes and availability of desired degree or program were rated very important by over 75% of the respondents. Factors which were least important were recommendations of friends and prior experience with EIU (see table 5).

Table 5

Factors Influencing Adult Students' Decisions to Enroll at EIU

Factor	Ratings				
	very imp*	somewhat imp*	undecided	somewhat unimp*	very unimp*
Location of classes	447 82.0%	65 11.9%	11 2.0%	7 1.3%	10 1.8%
Cost of taking a course	168 30.8%	156 28.6%	77 14.1%	56 10.3%	81 14.9%
Availa- bility of degree/ program	419 76.9%	74 13.6%	30 5.5%	3 .6%	13 2.4%
Reputation of EIU	126 23.1%	207 38.0%	133 24.4%	36 6.6%	34 6.2%
Talking with EIU faculty, staff/ students	103 18.9%	144 26.4%	134 24.6%	66 12.1%	90 16.5%
Recommen- dations of friends	85 15.6%	167 30.6%	112 20.6%	75 13.8%	100 18.3%
Prior experience with EIU	90 16.5%	74 13.6%	122 22.4%	57 10.5%	188 34.5%

*imp=important

*unimp=unimportant

Most students (30.5%) indicated their first source of information about EIU was friend, neighbor, or relative. Self inquiry was the second most frequent source of knowledge, indicated by 97 (17.8%) respondents. No respondents indicated they had learned of off-campus classes by a TV/radio broadcast (see Table 6).

Of those who indicated they learned from other sources, various providers of educational services were frequently mentioned. The educational office at Chanute Air Force Base was mentioned 28 times. Another institution of higher education or a counselor or instructor were mentioned 32 times (included were Danville Area Community College, Parkland College, Milliken University, Frontier College, Lakeview College of Nursing, and Olney Community College). Regional or County Educational Offices or contacts within the public school system were mentioned 16 times.

Table 7
Adult Students' Evaluation of Various Aspects of Off-
Campus Programs

Aspect	Ratings				
	very good	good	no opinion	poor	very poor
Variety of classes offered	121 22.2%	268 49.2%	77 14.1%	65 11.9%	11 2.0%
Quality of classes	227 41.7%	253 46.4%	48 8.8%	9 1.7%	8 1.5%
Location of classes	352 64.6%	148 27.2%	28 5.1%	10 1.8%	2 .4%
Classroom facilities	239 43.9%	228 41.8%	60 11.0%	14 2.6%	4 .7%
Times classes are scheduled	259 47.5%	229 42.0%	38 7.0%	9 1.7%	3 .6%
Length of class periods	196 36.0%	275 50.5%	55 10.1%	11 2.0%	3 .6%
Registration procedure	222 40.7%	212 38.9%	67 12.3%	24 4.4%	15 2.8%
Availability of accurate information	134 24.6%	238 43.7%	94 17.2%	57 10.5%	18 3.3%
Course descriptions in time table	169 31.0%	254 46.6%	92 16.9%	18 3.3%	8 1.55%
Helpfulness of EIU administrative services	188 34.5%	196 36.0%	109 20.0%	30 5.5%	18 3.3%

B. Class Location

This study surveyed students attending classes in seven off-campus locations. Most of the adult student respondents attended classes in Rantoul (215, 39.4%) or Danville (183, 33.6%). All other locations had fewer than 60 students attending. Using total site registration information from Adult and Continuing Education Programs, the chi-square test showed that the difference between the number of responses per site and the number of student registrations was not significant. Therefore the results of the survey were representative of the entire population of adult students attending EIU off-campus classes (see table 8).

Table 8

Adult Student Enrollment at Off-Campus Locations

Location	Survey Responses		Total Site Registration	
	no.	%	no.	%
Danville	183	33.6	278	-
Decatur	39	7.2	45	-
Olney	50	9.2	76	-
Rantoul	215	39.4	285	-
Salem	57	10.5	63	-
Shelbyville	15	2.8	16	-
Warrensburg	21	3.9	22	-

$X = 5.426$, 6df, $p < .05$, not significant

Over half the adult students (64.6%, 352) commuted 30 miles or less one-way to attend class. The rest, (33.4%) commuted further than 30 miles one-way to class. However, 53.4% indicated they would be willing to travel over 30 miles one-way to attend class (see table 9).

Table 9

Distance Adult Students Commute and Are Willing to Commute

Miles	current one-way commute		willing to accept as one-way commute	
	no.	%	no.	%
< 15 miles	218	40.0	75	13.8
15-30 miles	134	24.6	167	30.6
31-45 miles	91	16.7	150	27.5
46-60 miles	39	7.2	82	15.0
> 60 miles	52	9.5	54	9.9

Only 150 (27.5%) adult students knew of closer locations at which EIU could offer courses. These written suggestions were in three categories: 1) a name of a town--often the town in which the student lived, 2) a specific location within a town, or 3) a location where classes were already held but expressing a desire for additional courses to be offered at that location. Champaign-Urbana was the most frequently suggested additional location. That general area or specific locations within these cities were mentioned 55 times. Thirty-five other locations were suggested, five (Fairfield, Mount Vernon, Flora, Effingham, and Hoopston)

were mentioned 7 to 14 times and the rest only once or twice.

Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) launched the nation's first Learn & Shop College Credit Program in 1979. This is a coordinated program of introductory level college credit courses taught by regular academic departments in training rooms of department stores in convenient shopping centers in the suburbs of Indianapolis. This program is being copied across the United States and is one of the fastest growing concepts in adult higher education (Learn & Shop, 1987). After learning of this program, Adult and Continuing Education Programs wanted to receive some input from students as to whether this would be an option to pursue for EIU off-campus classes. Approximately three fourths of adult students, 411 (75.4%) responded that they would attend class which met in a shopping center. Only 112 (20.6%) indicated that they would not attend. The written comments about this question reflected that the course rather than the location would determine attendance.

C. Scheduled Class Meeting Times

Most students (518, 95%) thought the current class meeting schedule was acceptable. Only 21 (3.9%) indicated that it was not. Many off-campus classes currently meet from 7:00 to 9:30 pm. For 123 students (22.6%) it would

be better to meet from 6:00 to 8:30 pm; and for 102 students (18.7%) it would be better to meet 7:00 to 9:30 pm (see table 10).

Table 10

Adult Students' Best Times for Class Meetings

Time	No.	%
5:00-7:30	98	18.0
5:30-8:00	53	9.7
6:00-8:30	123	22.6
6:30-9:00	93	17.1
7:00-9:30	102	18.7
7:30-9:30	7	1.3
Other	10	1.8

In response to scheduling weekend classes, 340 (62.4%) indicated they would be interested in enrolling in a Saturday morning class. However, fewer (178, 32.7%) would be interested in enrolling in a Saturday afternoon class and only 99 (18.2%) would be interested in enrolling in a Sunday afternoon class (see Table 11).

Table 11

Interest in Classes Scheduled During the Weekend

Time	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	no.	%	no.	%
Saturday morning	340	62.4	192	32.5
Saturday afternoon	178	32.7	319	58.5
Sunday afternoon	99	18.2	398	73.0

Both number of nights in class and total credit hours carried influenced the number of classes in which adult students enrolled. Sixty percent (327) of the students surveyed indicated the number of nights in class was the more important factor. However for 193 (35.4%) the total credit hours carried was the more important factor. In response to the idea of taking two classes per evening, 156 (28.6%) were definitely interested, and 194 (35.6%) were probably interested. Therefore over half of all respondents (64.2%) were favorable toward the idea. However, 125 (22.9%) indicated they would probably or

definitely not be interested. Only 62 (11.4%) indicated they were uncertain.

D. Offering Additional Off-Campus Classes

During Spring semester 1988, EIU Adult and Continuing Education Programs offered the following number of courses by curricular area: Business-3, Education-27, English-2, Fine Arts-3, Math/Science-3, Geography/Geology-1, Social Studies-2, History-1, Technology-9, Psychology-1, and Health Studies-1.

Adult students were interested in having additional courses in most subject areas. Additional education courses were considered very important by 277 (50.8%) and somewhat important by 121 (22.2%). Computer science courses were considered very important or somewhat important by 300 (55.1%) of the students surveyed. Business courses were very important or somewhat important to 244 (44%) of the adult students (see table 12).

Other subjects respondents considered important to be offered off-campus were: accounting, agriculture, art, correctional management leadership, early childhood education, health education, human relations, law, library science, management, medical technology, psychology, secondary education, speech/language, and technology. Two other comments were to add a doctoral program and to offer additional undergraduate degrees besides BOG and BOSCO at off-campus locations.

Table 12
Importance of Offering Additional Classes in Various
Subjects

Subjects	Ratings				
	very imp.*	somewhat imp.*	undecided	somewhat unimp.*	very unimp.*
Business	152 27.9%	92 16.9%	139 25.5%	26 4.8%	100 18.3%
Computer Science	153 28.1%	147 27.0%	114 20.9%	22 4.0%	66 12.1%
Education	277 50.8%	121 22.2%	67 12.3%	23 4.2%	26 4.8%
English	108 19.8%	126 23.1%	150 27.5%	45 8.3%	71 13.0%
Fine Arts Humanity	91 16.7%	141 25.9%	153 28.1%	39 7.2%	76 13.9%
Foreign Language	41 7.5%	85 15.6%	172 31.6%	60 11.0%	135 24.8%
Life Science	81 14.9%	100 18.3%	173 31.7%	47 8.6%	97 17.8%
Math	129 23.7%	133 24.4%	131 24.0%	30 5.5%	80 14.7%
Physical Science	90 16.5%	120 22.0%	145 26.6%	40 7.3%	98 18.0%
Physical Education	29 5.3%	67 12.3%	145 6.6%	69 12.7%	178 32.7%
Social Science, History	90 16.5%	148 27.2%	147 27.0%	26 4.8%	80 14.7%

*imp.=important

*unimp.=unimportant

IV. Additional Services Desired by Adult Students

Section IV of the survey focused on adult students' perceived need for additional services. Over 50% of the adult students indicated they would use career planning counseling or workshops if they were available. There was higher interest in time management workshop (45.9%), study skills workshops (43.3%), and financial aid information (39.1%) than there was in an organization for adult students (25%), tutors (24.2%), and child care facilities (24.0%) (see table 13).

Table 13

Anticipated Use of Additional Services for Adult Students

Type of Service	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	no.	%	no.	%
Study skills workshop	236	43.3	282	51.7
Tutors	132	24.2	382	70.1
Organization for Adult Students	136	25.0	375	68.8
Child care facilities	131	24.0	378	69.4
Career planning services	305	56.0	213	39.1
Financial aid information	213	39.1	295	54.1
Time management workshop	250	45.9	265	48.6

V. Student Information

Section V focused on basic demographic information.

Of respondents completing the survey 195 (35.8%) were male and 347 (63.7%) were female. Most (86.4 %) reported they were employed either full-time (76.3%) or part-time (10.1%). Only 12 respondents indicated they were full-time students, 15 that they were full-time homemakers, none that they were unemployed and not seeking work, and 9 that they were unemployed and seeking work (see Table 14).

Table 14

Employment Status of Adult Students

Status	no.	%
Employed full-time	416	76.3
Employed part-time	55	10.1
Unemployed and seeking	9	1.7
Unemployed and not seeking	0	0
Full-time homemaker	15	2.8
Full-time student	12	2.2
Other	7	1.3

Most respondents (271, 49.7%) indicated the major source of financing their education was personal earnings. The next most frequently indicated sources were government funding (93, 17.1%) and employer assistance (57, 10.5%) (see Table 15).

Table 15

Major Source of Financing Education

Means	no.	%
Personal earnings	271	49.7
Family member	30	5.5
Assistantship	2	.4
Loan	18	3.3
Government funding	93	17.1
Employer pre-paid or post-paid	57	10.5
Savings	7	1.3
Other	19	3.5

The final question in this section asked respondents to write the zip code for their home address. Respondents came from 107 different zip codes. Three were from Indiana and the rest from Illinois. Most respondents (96) came from Champaign-Urbana, 89 from Danville, and 85 from Rantoul and Chanute Air Force Base.

VI. Open-ended Question--Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

The comments which adult students wrote fell into two general categories: 1) expression of appreciation for the program or some aspect of the program , and 2) expression

of a need or desired change. Examples of appreciation for the overall program were as follows: "Eastern has provided the only opportunity I have for attaining a college degree at this time in my life by offering the off-campus programs."; "I would not be able to get my degree if it wasn't for this program!"; "EIU courses have been a Godsend. I have been wanting to go back to school for 19 years. Your continuing education classes have made that possible for me." In particular adult students expressed appreciation for the location of off-campus classes--"thanks for coming to Decatur...", "it's much easier to come to Danville...than to drive to Charleston...you have made my life easier." Also they expressed appreciation for the time classes were offered--"I can work and go to school", "we can't quit jobs".

The needs expressed fell into three categories: 1) need for more information, 2) need for better access to resources, and 3) need for more courses. Students expressed the desire to know "next semester's schedules sooner", to have more information about program requirements, earlier information about graduation ceremonies and workshop schedules, and clearer information about the processes of attaining education off-campus. The students expressed a desire for better access to library materials. Students commented on their desire to have a larger variety of courses, a broader range of

classes, more classes per semester, and more choice of classes.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

Important information about EIU adult students attending off-campus classes was obtained from this study. The discussion of the results will follow the outline of the topical sections of the survey.

I. Deciding to Attend College

Why do these students enroll in college classes? Adult students have a variety of reasons for attending college. Richter-Antion (1986) reported adults were generally involved in career-related education. The career-related factors were definitely important to EIU adult students, since they were frequently given as the most important factors for returning to school. However, other factors were also important. To earn a degree was mentioned most frequently. This reason could also be career-related because a degree is often necessary for career change or advancement, especially in education. For these EIU students to earn a degree and to advance in their careers were the major reasons adults returned to school.

What do they want to gain? From the above information, this researcher concluded that the students want to earn the credentials, skills, and knowledge necessary to attain their career goals.

What are their educational goals? Over half the students surveyed wanted to complete a graduate degree. Adult students attending EIU off-campus classes do have high educational goals. Earning a degree is very important to these students--89.7% were pursuing a degree and only 10.3% did not have definite goals to earn a degree.

II. Deciding to Attend EIU

What attracted students to EIU? The two major factors attracting students to EIU were location of the classes and the availability of desired programs. Due to adult responsibilities, these students cannot move on-campus, therefore it is important to bring educational programs to them.

How did they first find out about EIU extension classes? Word of mouth was the most frequently used method--friend, neighbor, or relative and representatives of various area educational institutions.

III. Current Extension Programs

How do current students rate off-campus programs? Overall, the students expressed satisfaction with the current programs.

How are current locations for holding class? Location of classes received a very good or good rating by over three fourths of the students. Commuting 30 miles is acceptable to over half the adult students.

What locations might be considered? Some students desired a closer location; many suggested the Champaign-Urbana area. Meeting in a shopping center would be acceptable to three-fourths of the respondents.

What scheduling changes would improve the program? Overall the students expressed satisfaction with the current class schedule. Most responses were divided among four times: 5:00-7:30 pm (18%); 6:00-8:30pm (22.6%); 6:30-9:00pm (17.1%); and 7:00-9:30pm (18.7%). The variety of work schedules and commuting distances probably account for the variety of preferences. Based on these results, it would be difficult to choose a different time to schedule evening classes which would be better for more students than the current schedule. Scheduling classes of Saturday morning received some support, but Saturday and Sunday afternoon had little support.

What additional courses are desired? Again a variety of needs. Education courses were the most desired, probably reflecting the needs of a high number of adult students studying education. Currently education is the subject area in which the most courses are offered. The next two top needs were computer science and business. There were no courses offered by EIU off-campus in either of these subjects during Spring semester 1988. These subjects may be areas to investigate the possibility of adding to the off-campus course schedule. The variety of

classes offered received only a 22.2% very good rating, which was one of the lowest in this section of the survey. This may reflect student desire for additional courses.

IV. Additional Services Desired by Adult Students

What services would adult students use if they were available? Career planning services were the most likely to be used if they were offered. This relates to the importance of career-related factors to adults attending school. Several researchers (Raines 1986, Eversoll, 1986; Iovacchini et. al., 1985; Shannon, 1986; & Arbieter, 1978) reported that adults often return to school during times of transition and that career-related factors are often involved in educational decisions. The two other services which received significant mention were time management workshops and financial aid information. These are both services which would deal with situational barriers faced by adult students.

IV. Student Information

In the literature there was abundant data about characteristics of current participants in adult education. The EIU students have characteristics similar to those reported in the literature. For instance, there was more female than male students in EIU off-campus classes. This was as Iovacchini, et. al. (1985) reported. Most surveyed adult students were employed full-time. This too was a reported characteristic of adult students

(Richter-Antion, 1986; Cross, 1980; Iovacchini et. al., 1985). Also most surveyed adult students reported paying for their own education. Cross (1980) reported this as a general characteristic of adult students.

When using needs assessments for planning, Cross (1979) warned, "needs assessments are necessarily based on the current perception and understandings of the respondents. They are better at telling what is than what might be.... Needs assessments have had difficulty introducing new concepts and new ideas to respondents." (p.11) She used the example of electric refrigerators--during the era of ice boxes, the public would have reported their need to be better ice service not a new electric refrigerator. So in drawing conclusions concerning educational changes, researchers may conclude that adults are conservative in educational demands and do not prefer anything new. However,

there is good experiential evidence...that adults are looking for new kinds of educational experiences, but like the refrigerator, such innovations are more likely to be recognized when they appear than to be demanded in the abstract. (Cross, 1979, p.12)

Therefore, this researcher suggests that the overall satisfaction with the status quo of off-campus programs not lull adult educators at EIU into complacency or away

from considering and introducing new and creative educational experiences for adults.

Conclusions

Overall, this study showed that these adult students have legitimate educational needs. They were serious students with definite and high educational goals. In keeping with EIU's Mission and Goals Statement, Adult and Continuing Education Programs is providing an important service to adult students attending off-campus classes. Many educational needs are being met and adult students expressed gratitude. Students surveyed were generally satisfied with the current off-campus program. The location of classes was very important to these students. However, because adult students are a heterogeneous group, there are more needs to meet and more service to provide. The respondents expressed interest in expanding the current programs--particularly to add new classes and to offer more classes off-campus. They also expressed they would use career planning services if they were provided off-campus. Champaign-Urbana was indicated by several students as an additional location at which to offer classes.

Recommendations

For Future Study

Since this is the first study of adult students attending EIU off-campus classes conducted through Adult

and Continuing Education Programs, it is a first step in program evaluation and needs assessment to be used for program planning. This type of study should be done regularly and the information used as a basis for planning. Areas in which more than 50% of surveyed students expressed interest should be discussed and changes investigated and planned. Because scheduling preferences, courses desired, and services used might vary by location, looking at the responses separately could provide important information for planning. Also, knowing perceived needs within various degree programs could be helpful. Since many adult students indicated they desired additional education courses, a more specific investigation of the types of courses would be useful to planners.

For future use of the survey, some revisions are suggested. First, add a question to obtain respondent age. Age is important in defining adult students and also in adult developmental stages. Age could be closely related to the services students desired. Second, the questions concerning weekend classes should be expanded to include the idea of weekend college and not just a semester-long course which is scheduled during the weekend. Third, the zip code question should be eliminated because the information gathered did not prove useful for planning. Overall, the written comments were

very valuable in helping this researcher understand the students' viewpoint. Therefore, providing more opportunity for comments and idea expression would be useful.

For Administration

Based on the findings of this survey, Adult and Continuing Education Programs could consider the following action: 1) Look for a location for classes in the Champaign-Urbana area. Shopping centers would be acceptable to the students if such locations were available. 2) Investigate the possibility of offering more Saturday morning classes. 3) Develop ways to provide off-campus students with more information. Because informal sources of information were predominately the way students find out about EIU off-campus classes, accurate and complete information can be difficult to acquire. It needs to be available to registered students, to prospective students, and to counselors and staff at area institutions who provide referrals to EIU. Providing projected schedules of off-campus classes would aid students in planning. Also, a handbook or newsletter for off-campus students which would provide information about procedures, deadlines, graduation, registration, etc. might be considered. 4) Plan ways to provide career planning services at off-campus locations. Non-credit

workshops, credit classes, or visiting counselors might be considered.

Summary

This study of adult students attending EIU off-campus classes shows that adult students have definite educational goals and legitimate educational needs. Surveyed students expressed satisfaction with the current off-campus program conducted by EIU Adult and Continuing Education Programs. Location was rated as very important to these students. Besides expressing gratitude for the educational opportunity off-campus classes gave them, they also expressed need for more information and more classes. They desired making more classes available, expanding to additional off-campus locations, attending Saturday morning classes, and providing career planning services off-campus.

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APPENDIXES

- A. Survey Instrument
- B. Letter to Instructors (on-campus locations)
- C. Letter to Instructors (off-campus locations)
- D. Thank You Letter to Instructors

APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

**EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
OFF-CAMPUS EDUCATION
LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE**



Adult & Continuing
Education

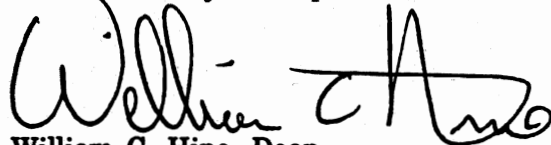
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY OFF-CAMPUS EDUCATION

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

This is the first study of adult students enrolled in off-campus extension courses conducted by EIU Adult and Continuing Education Programs. By cooperating, you will help provide important information to help us better understand extension students and their opinions. With this information we will be better able to plan for the future. Please answer all the questions. If you wish to comment on any questions or to qualify your answers, please feel free to use the space in the margins. Your comments are important and will be read. We need your input!

Please give your completed survey to your class instructor. These surveys will be kept confidential. You may remove your name from the front cover. You need to only complete one survey even if you attend more than one class. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Thank You for your help.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William C. Hine', followed by a stylized flourish or initial.

William C. Hine, Dean
Adult and Continuing Education Programs
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois 61920
(217) 581-5114

I Deciding to Attend College

We would like to begin by asking a few questions about your decision to enroll in college as an adult and about your educational goals.

- A. Adult individuals have various reasons for enrolling in college. Please indicate if you considered the following reasons when you decided to enroll in college courses. (circle the number to indicate yes or no for each reason)

	(circle number)		
	YES	NO	
1. To prepare for a new career	1	2	(4)
2. To qualify for advancement in my present job	1	2	(5)
3. To improve skills in my present job	1	2	(6)
4. To earn a degree	1	2	(7)
5. To learn more about a new subject area	1	2	(8)
6. To meet new people	1	2	(9)
7. To challenge my ability to learn	1	2	(10)
8. To prepare for retirement	1	2	(11)
9. To satisfy personal interest, self enrichment	1	2	(12)

OTHER (please specify) _____

- B. Which of the above reasons were the most important? (Put the item number 1-9 on the appropriate line)

___ MOST IMPORTANT (13)

___ SECOND MOST IMPORTANT (14)

___ THIRD MOST IMPORTANT (15)

C. What is the highest educational goal that you hope to achieve in the next five years? (circle number)

1. COMPLETE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE (16)
2. COMPLETE A MASTER'S DEGREE
3. COMPLETE AN EDUCATION SPECIALIST DEGREE
4. STUDY FOR A DOCTORATE DEGREE
5. NOT SEEKING A DEGREE
6. UNDECIDED
7. OTHER (please specify): _____

D. Presently, in what educational program are you enrolled? (circle number)

1. BOARD OF GOVERNORS
BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE (BOG) (17)
2. BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
CAREER OCCUPATIONS (BOSCO)
3. GRADUATE DEGREE
(please specify major): _____
4. NON DEGREE UNDERGRADUATE
5. NON DEGREE GRADUATE
6. OTHER

II. Deciding to Attend Eastern Illinois University

- A. Several factors influence an adult student's choice of a particular school to attend. When you first decided to attend Eastern Illinois University classes, what influenced your choice? Please indicate how important the following factors were in your initial decision to enroll in EIU off-campus courses.

(Please circle the rating number using the scale below.)

1. VERY IMPORTANT
2. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
3. UNDECIDED
4. SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT
5. VERY UNIMPORTANT

	importance of factors (circle number)					
	important	undecided			unimportant	
Location of classes	1	2	3	4	5	(18)
Cost of taking a course	1	2	3	4	5	(19)
Availability of desired degree or program	1	2	3	4	5	(20)
The reputation of EIU as an university	1	2	3	4	5	(21)
Talking with EIU faculty, staff or students	1	2	3	4	5	(22)
Recommendations of friends	1	2	3	4	5	(23)
Prior experience with EIU	1	2	3	4	5	(24)

Other (please specify)

- B. How did you first find out about EIU off-campus extension courses?

1. FRIEND, NEIGHBOR OR RELATIVE (25)
2. EMPLOYER
3. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE
4. EIU PUBLICATION
5. SELF INQUIRY
6. TV/RADIO BROADCAST
7. OTHER (please specify)

III Current Extension Programs

A. As a currently enrolled student, you have valuable first-hand experience in EIU's continuing education program at off-campus locations. We would like to know your opinion of the off-campus programs. Please indicate your rating of the following aspects of the continuing education program. (circle rating number which most accurately reflects your opinion)

1. Very Good
2. Good
3. No Opinion
4. Poor
5. Very Poor

	(circle number)					
	Very Good		No Opinion		Very Poor	
Variety of courses offered	1	2	3	4	5	(26)
Quality of classes offered	1	2	3	4	5	(27)
Location of the classes	1	2	3	4	5	(28)
Classroom facilities (such as size, furnishings, lighting)	1	2	3	4	5	(29)
Times classes are scheduled	1	2	3	4	5	(30)
Length of class periods	1	2	3	4	5	(31)
Registration procedure	1	2	3	4	5	(32)
Availability of accurate information about educational matters and services	1	2	3	4	5	(33)
Course descriptions contained in the timetable	1	2	3	4	5	(34)
Helpfulness of EIU administrative services	1	2	3	4	5	(35)

B. Let's consider the location of classes.

1. Please indicate at which locations you attend EIU classes this semester. (circle appropriate number to indicate yes or no for each location)

	(circle number)		
	YES	NO	
Charleston	1	2	(36)
Danville	1	2	(37)
Decatur	1	2	(38)
Olney	1	2	(39)
Rantoul	1	2	(40)
Salem	1	2	(41)
Shelbyville	1	2	(42)
Warrensburg	1	2	(43)

2. What is the farthest distance that you commute one-way to attend an EIU course? (circle number)

1. LESS THAN 15 MILES (44)
2. 15 TO 30 MILES
3. 31 TO 45 MILES
4. 46 TO 60 MILES
5. MORE THAN 60 MILES

3. How far are you willing to travel one-way to attend class? (circle number)

1. LESS THAN 15 MILES (45)
2. 15 TO 30 MILES
3. 31 TO 45 MILES
4. 46 TO 60 MILES
5. MORE THAN 60 MILES

4. Is there a location closer to you where you think EIU could offer courses? (circle number)

1. YES (please specify): _____ (46)
2. NO

5. If EIU offered a class which met in a shopping center would you attend? (circle number)

1. YES (47)
2. NO

C. Now let's consider scheduling class meeting times. We would like to know when is the best time for you to attend class.

1. Are the meeting times of your current course(s) acceptable?
(circle number)

1. YES (48)
2. NO

2. If the meeting times of evening classes would be changed, when is the best time for you to attend class on weekdays? (circle number)

1. 5:00 TO 7:30 P.M. (49)
2. 5:30 TO 8:00 P.M.
3. 6:00 TO 8:30 P.M.
4. 6:30 TO 9:00 P.M.
5. 7:00 TO 9:30 P.M.
6. 7:30 TO 9:30 P.M.
7. OTHER (please specify): _____

3. Please indicate if you would be interested in enrolling in a course scheduled at the following times? (please circle appropriate number indicating yes or no for each choice)

	(circle number)		
	YES	NO	
Saturday mornings (9 - 11:30 a.m.)	1	2	(50)
Saturday afternoons	1	2	(51)
Sunday afternoons	1	2	(52)

4. Which of the following is more important to you in determining the number of classes in which you will enroll? (circle number)

1. TOTAL CREDIT HOURS CARRIED (53)
2. NUMBER OF NIGHTS IN CLASS

5. If classes were scheduled in the late afternoon (beginning 5:00 or 5:30 P.M.) and mid evening (beginning 7:30 or 8:00 P.M.), would you be interested in taking two classes on the same evening? (circle number)

1. DEFINITELY YES (54)
2. PROBABLY YES
3. UNCERTAIN
4. PROBABLY NO
5. DEFINITELY NO

D. Now a few questions about courses EIU might consider offering off-campus.

When you think about the courses currently available off-campus, what other courses do you think are important to add? Please indicate how important it is to you for EIU to offer additional classes in the following subjects. (please circle the rating number using the following scale)

1. VERY IMPORTANT
2. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
3. UNDECIDED
4. SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT
5. VERY UNIMPORTANT

	importance of adding these classes (circle number)					
	Important	Undecided			Unimportant	
Business	1	2	3	4	5	(55)
Computer Science	1	2	3	4	5	(56)
Education	1	2	3	4	5	(57)
English	1	2	3	4	5	(58)
Fine Arts/ Humanities	1	2	3	4	5	(59)
Foreign Language	1	2	3	4	5	(60)
Life Science (zoology, botany)	1	2	3	4	5	(61)
Math	1	2	3	4	5	(62)
Physical Science						
(physics, chemistry, geology)	1	2	3	4	5	(63)
Physical Education	1	2	3	4	5	(64)
Social Sciences, History	1	2	3	4	5	(65)
OTHER (please specify):						

IV Additional Services Desired by Adult Students

Which of these additional services would you use if they were available to you? Please indicate your response to the following services. (circle the appropriate number indicating yes or no for each choice)

	(circle number)		
	YES	NO	
Study skills workshop	1	2	(66)
Tutors	1	2	(67)
Organization or club for off-campus adult continuing education students	1	2	(68)
Child care facilities at class location	1	2	(69)
Career planning counseling or workshops	1	2	(70)
Financial aid information	1	2	(71)
Time management workshop	1	2	(72)

OTHER (please specify): _____

V Student Information

In conclusion we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself that will help us to better understand and use the information that you have given us.

1. Are you male or female? (circle number)

1. MALE (73)
2. FEMALE

2. Which of the following descriptions best describes your current employment status? (circle number)

1. EMPLOYED FULL-TIME
(40 HOURS OR MORE PER WEEK) (74)
2. EMPLOYED PART-TIME (LESS THAN 40 HOURS PER WEEK)
3. UNEMPLOYED AND SEEKING A JOB
4. UNEMPLOYED AND NOT SEEKING A JOB
5. FULL TIME HOMEMAKER
6. FULL TIME STUDENT
7. OTHER (please specify): _____

3. What is your major source of financing the cost of education at EIU? (circle number)

1. PERSONAL EARNINGS
2. FAMILY MEMBER (PARENTS, SPOUSE
OR OTHER RELATIVE)
3. ASSISTANTSHIP
4. LOAN
5. GOVERNMENT FUNDING
6. EMPLOYER PRE-PAID OR POST-PAID
7. SAVINGS
8. OTHER (please specify): _____

(75)

4. Please enter the five digit zip code of your home address.

(76-80)

Thank you for your assistance.

VI. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about EIU off-campus extension programs? If so please use this space for that purpose. Also, provide any comments you wish to make that you think will help our future efforts to improve the extension education offered by Eastern Illinois University.

APPENDIX B

Letter to Instructors
(on-campus addresses)



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS 61920

William C. Hine, Dean
Adult and Continuing Education
Booth House
(217) 581-5114

March 25, 1988

Dear EIU Faculty:

In an attempt to be of better service to our off-campus students, we are conducting a survey of our off-campus students. Enclosed with this memo are survey instruments for students in your off-campus class. Each survey has a name label on it, however, some students in your class may not receive a survey instrument because they will get one in another class. Students need only to fill out one survey. Please have the students complete the instrument and return it to you during the evening of off-campus class. The survey takes approximately ten minutes to complete and has instructions included. It could be filled out before class, during break or after class. I would greatly appreciate you returning the completed surveys to my office through campus mail by April 8, 1988.

Your cooperation and support in this important matter are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me, and thank you for your help and support of Adult and Continuing Education Programs.

Sincerely,

W. C. Hine, Dean
Adult and Continuing Education
Programs

/eh

attach.

APPENDIX C

Letter to Instructors
(off-campus locations)



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS 61920

Office of Continuing Education
Booth House
(217) 581-5114

March 25, 1988

Dear Faculty:

In an attempt to better serve the adult and continuing education students, we are conducting a survey of those students presently enrolled in off-campus courses. You will find enclosed survey instruments for students enrolled in your off-campus course. You will see that each instrument has been assigned to a particular student in your class in order to avoid duplication. If some of your students are not assigned copies, they will receive them in other courses in which they are enrolled this semester. Please ask your students to complete the survey and return it to you the same evening. The survey takes approximately ten minutes to complete and has instructions included. It could be completed before class, during break or after class. I would greatly appreciate it if you would return the completed surveys to my office by April 8, 1988. I have enclosed a postage-paid addressed envelope for your convenience. Your cooperation and support in this important matter are greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, and thank you for your help and support of Adult and Continuing Education Programs.

Sincerely,

Donald L. McKee, Director
Off-campus Academic Services

f

Enclosures

APPENDIX D

Thank You Letter to Instructors



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS 61920

William C. Hine, Dean
Adult and Continuing Education
Booth House
(217) 581-5114

May 12, 1988

Dear Faculty Member:

Thank you for your help in distributing survey instruments to adult students enrolled in your off-campus classes. We appreciate your time and effort toward making this survey successful. Without your assistance, we could not have contacted as many students as we did.

We are encouraged by your willingness to support Adult and Continuing Education Programs. Thank you again for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

William C. Hine, Dean

Margaret Schrock, Researcher

/eh