

**An Analysis of High School Guidance Counselors' Perceptions of the
Admissions Staff at OCC**

Prepared by:

**Leon Hill
Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis**

October, 1996

Introduction

This report documents how guidance counselors, at various Oakland County high schools, understand the functions of the admissions office and their overall impressions of OCC. The analysis is generalized across the entire college; no individual campuses are identified.

A review of the literature suggests that guidance counselors possess certain influences on college student choice and selection (Brodbelt, 1982; Erdmann, 1983; and, Ray, 1992). Although the majority of the previous research has been focused on the relationship between counselors and college choice and selection, no relevant studies have been conducted on guidance counselor's perceptions of admissions staffs and processes.

Methodology

A total of 241 surveys were sent to guidance counselors at public and private high schools and adult education centers. Ninety-two individuals returned the survey for a response rate of 38 percent. The instrument was developed jointly by Enrollment Services and the Office of Institutional Research.

The questionnaire was segmented into four sections: general demographic data, overall impressions of OCC, perceptions of admissions' services and personnel, and an open-ended narrative section. Percentages, correlations and qualitative coding were conducted on the data.

The following is the analysis of the counselor's responses to the survey questions.

Results

Overall Impressions

The survey attempted to ascertain how high school guidance counselors discerned certain functions of OCC. A large percentage of counselors would recommend Oakland Community College to graduating seniors. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents (See Figure 1) stated that they would advise graduating seniors to apply to OCC for continued study. In addition, nearly all counselors (99%) believed that students who attend Oakland Community College receive a quality education (See Figure 2).

When asked to evaluate how various academic programs prepared students to transfer to another college or university of their choice, responses were somewhat mixed. For

instance, 80 percent agreed that the General Studies program and 83 percent agreed that the Liberal Arts program (See Figure 3) prepared students to continue their education at another institution. However, only 63 percent agreed that Pre-Engineering and 69 percent agreed that the Applied Science Degree prepared students to transfer. In addition, 28 percent who answered the pre-engineering question and 22 percent who responded to the applied science programs inquiry stated that they did not know about such programs at OCC.

We also asked high school counselors if the Applied Science Degree and Certificate programs prepared students to enter the workforce. Eighty-seven percent agreed that the Applied Science Degree programs and 75 percent agreed that the Certificate programs assisted students enter the workplace from academe (See Figure 4).

Perceptions of Admissions' Services and Personnel

Guidance counselors were also asked to assess certain admissions' processes, services and personnel at OCC. A majority (74%) were pleased with the quality of communication between themselves and the admissions office (See Figure 5). In addition, a large majority of the high school counselors agreed that the admissions staff was courteous (91%), professional (89%), and well-informed (88%) (See Figure 6).

Services were also evaluated in order to determine which were important for those students who were considering attending OCC (See Figure 7). Counselors rated most highly financial aid (93%), the ability to transfer (91%), and scholarships (90%). The two services which had the least amount of agreement were telephone registration for classes (80%) and advanced placement programs (80%).

We also reviewed those services which would be valuable to counselors when advising students who may attend OCC. Many of the counselors suggested that telephone requests for information (94%) (See Figure 8) and telephone requests for material (96%) (See Figure 9) were salient when counseling students. In addition, eighty-five percent (See Figure 10) stated that information and materials were received in a timely manner, and seventy-five percent (See Figure 11) affirmed that OCC updates information on a regular basis.

When we assessed the services high school counselors received from OCC compared with that of other colleges, 55 percent stated it was above average, 41 percent suggested it was average and four percent mentioned that it was below average (See Figure 12).

A frequency count for each question is provided in Appendix A.

Narratives

Counselors were also given the opportunity to add other comments they may have had on processes, services and staff. The narratives are provided in Appendix B of this report.

Many of the responses were favorable toward OCC and the admissions office:

- Everything is wonderful. We are pleased with the services of OCC and your concern you give our students here at OTC---SW. Thank you.
- Keep up the wonderful work!! We appreciate everything you do!!

There did seem to be two salient concerns which emerged from the counselors' comments. The first one concerned their perception of being able to contact or gain access to admissions officers:

- Need a phone with a direct line to counselors.
- When calling OCC, I find the secretaries do not give full information to me. I usually must find out information from another source and counselors are always busy. There is a long wait---need more counselors.
- It is difficult to reach people.
- We are very impressed with OCC because of the programs and staff; however, it is hard to reach counselors when we need them.

The second issue was about their opinions of not having or receiving enough information on students who enrolled at OCC:

- I don't know enough about transfer credits to four-year colleges.
- Although our students know about the existence of OCC and many seniors ultimately attend OCC, very few know anything about programs offered. This is the time of year that a rep should visit and talk to undecided seniors. Set up a table at lunch!!
- Would like to request annual feedback on which of our students are currently attending OCC.

Correlations were also conducted on the numerical data. The analysis suggested that there were significant and strong relationships between many variables. The strongest relationships were found among the admissions staff. There was a strong relationship between being professional and courteous ($r=.92$) The second strongest relationship was

on guidance counselors understanding the guest student process and understanding the process of dual enrollment ($r=.73$). The only negative correlation which was significant ($r=-.36$) were the variables of dual enrollment and certificate programs.

Discussion

Overall it seems that the guidance counselors at Oakland County's secondary educational institutions were quite satisfied with the various levels of service at Oakland Community College. A majority of the counselors would recommend OCC to seniors and believe that students receive a quality education. In addition, many of them suggested that most of the academic programs prepared students to transfer or continue their educational endeavors.

Guidance counselors also rated highly the admissions office at OCC. Many believed the admissions staff to be courteous, professional and well-informed. Although the personnel received high marks, some of the admissions processes were found to be only adequate. Counselors considered telephone requests for information and materials important when advising students. However, they did suggest that they must wait a long period of time for a counselor on the phone or that there was no one available to answer their questions. In addition, they also seemed to lack certain aggregated information about their students once they enrolled at OCC. This was not only evident in their narratives but also in the fact that a few counselors did not answer question three or four of the survey. Many respondents noted that they did not have any or sufficient information to make this assessment.

The correlation output affirms some basic common knowledge. For instance, guidance counselors perceive that there is a significant relationship between the admissions staff being courteous and professional. Also, the data seems to suggest, albeit not as strongly, that there may be a negative relationship between counselors understanding the Dual Enrollment process and believing that Certificate programs prepare students for the job market. One interpretation of this finding might suggest that as counselors understand more about the Dual Enrollment program at OCC, they are less likely to believe that the Certificate programs prepare students to enter the work force.

Limitations

A few shortcomings of the survey are inherent. First, there seemed to be a specific section of the survey which guidance counselors knew little to nothing about. This was reflected in their comments pertaining to whether certain OCC programs prepared a student to transfer. Thus, responses given in this portion of the survey may be suspect.

A second limitation of the instrument was the issue of the validity of certain questions. Some questions were fairly vague and may have been interpreted differently by various counselors. In addition, most variables were assessed by only one question, which raises the issue of reliability.

Conclusion and Future Direction

In summary, counselors seemed to be very satisfied and impressed with the overall quality of the services they receive from OCC. Many believe the level of pedagogy is of high caliber and would recommend OCC to their students as an institution of higher learning.

Guidance counselors were also quite satisfied with the admissions staff and services provided to students who were considering attending OCC. The only dissenting comments about the admissions processes seemed to be centered on their not being able to contact admissions officers by phone and not being supplied with certain information about their students once they had enrolled at OCC. These two areas seem to provide direction in which to further assess these issues. Does having a lack of information of prior students who have enrolled at OCC or not being able to contact or have access to admissions staff affect guidance counselors' perceptions or recommendations of students to OCC? In addition, approximately one-quarter of the high school counselors did not know about OCC's Pre-engineering program or Applied Science Degree. These two programs may need to be "marketed" more in order to increase their awareness among guidance counselors.

References

- Brodbeck, S. (1982). The guidance counselor's role in advising college-bound students. *Clearing House*, v55, n5, pp. 203-207.
- Erdmann, D. G. (1983). An examination of factors influencing student choice in the college selection process. *Journal of College Admissions*, 100, p.3-6.
- Ray, M. S. (1992). The college-choice process for high school students: An evaluation of high school counselor interventions and strategies. (ERIC Document No. 350 541).