

Project 2015

ONONDAGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION: INTERNAL SCAN

A Look to the Future of Community Colleges

Historically, there has been little lag time between an economic change or demographic shift and its impact at community colleges. When World War II veterans using the GI Bill packed campuses at the same time industry need skilled workers to convert from arsenals to consumer goods, community colleges added workforce training to their repertoire. When the optimism of the 1960's made education the preferred choice of remedying social inequities, hundreds of community colleges were built to accommodate new students.

Technology is the driving force behind the newest test of community colleges' agility. Technological advances make it possible for people to live longer. Community college enrollment is expected to grow, and community colleges will likely confer more associate degrees (source: American Association of Community Colleges).

Technological innovations in the workplace are expected to fuel enrollment by people seeking training or skill upgrades. Distance learning technologies may expand community colleges' capacity without massive, new building projects. These technologies have intensified competition for students by erasing the historically defined boundaries of public community colleges. Also, technology increases the potential for people constrained by time and distance to advance their education, but technology also carries the risk of cutting out the low-income populations community colleges serve because owning a personal computer is beyond the means of many community college students. On the other hand, competition is pushing community colleges to consider students as customers whose instruction and services should be delivered at the time, location, and pace of the students' choosing.

Technology is fueling the growth of foreign trade. Consequently commerce actively seeks people with an understanding of international issues. Many community colleges offer international programs or at least some offerings to foster an awareness of foreign cultures and the interconnectedness of the global economy.

The flexibility of community colleges will be tested as never before. How is OCC responding to these challenges?

Onondaga Community College (OCC) is a dynamic and comprehensive resource for Onondaga County. We offer two-year degree and one-year certificate programs that serve as job-entry educational experience or transfer opportunities at four-year institutions. Eight buildings housing over 60 different-degree granting programs make up the entire campus. Enrollment has grown to over 8,000 students. On-campus housing is in the planning stages. A comprehensive array of support services enables our students to succeed in meeting their academic goals no matter what their life stage when entering the academic setting. We continue to serve the educational and economic development needs of the region and have nearly 29,000 alumni.

OCC is an active civic participant and maintains innovative partnerships with business and industry.

Anticipating and addressing the County's changing demographics is an integral component of OCC's strategic plan. OCC is committed to its mission of service: in its belief that "Everyone has a right to access educational opportunity at any life stage"; in its learning-focused outcome that "Innovations in programs and methods of delivery will respond in a timely manner to a rapidly changing environment, with particular sensitivity to community needs; in its community-oriented approach in which "The College will be a significant resource to the County...in responding to appropriate societal and economic concerns."

Over the period 1998 – 2003, OCC has experienced increased diversification of its student populations by ethnicity, but not age (source: OCC Office of Institutional Research and Planning, August 2003, *2003 – Program Annual Review*).

While the proportion of adult students sixty years and older has increased slightly from 0.2% in the 1998 fall semester to 0.3% in the 2003 fall semester, it is a very small percentage of OCC's overall market. The proportion of adult students forty-one years to sixty years has fluctuated from 11.2% in the 1998 fall semester to 11.4% in the 2000 fall semester to 9.7% in the 2003 fall semester. Adult students represent, however, an important opportunity for job retraining and enhancement skills.

OCC has initiated in 2000 an international student program coordinated by a professional employee to serve the growing number of international students. In addition, OCC is expanding its instructional capacity to serve the educational needs of its "English for Speakers of Other Languages" (ESOL) student population.

The focus of this brief addresses current and proposed strategies designed to meet the needs of Onondaga County's changing population demographics and considers activities in which OCC is engaged to address the broad changes occurring in our service area.

1. The evaluation of policies, programs, and management issues relating to changing demographics is a continuous process. It is part of OCC's business practice and strategic plan to be sufficiently nimble and flexible to meet the needs of the County's population.
2. Current OCC policies, programs, and initiatives intended to respond to the County's changing demographics, with particular regard to its aging population include:
 - 2.1 Outreach to senior populations who look to OCC for a variety of needs involving education and training (including auditing classes tuition-free on a space available basis as authorized by New York Education Law...nearly 340 senior citizens audited courses from the 1998 fall semester through the 2003 fall semester...source: OCC Office of Institutional Research and Planning), cultural events (including the inaugural season of "Arts Across Campus"), and recreational opportunities (including adult swimming through the community aquatics program, CAPOCC);
 - 2.2 OCC offers senior populations traditional educational offerings as well as innovative access through our online distance-learning program that began in 2001 and will feature over 60 "anytime – anywhere" courses in a variety of disciplines for the 2004 fall semester and anticipates as many as five degree

- programs by the 2005 fall semester. Adult students can access their courses and interact asynchronously with their instructors and classmates at times and a location of their choosing...NOTE: as the County's population pool (18 to 21) from which the central core of college enrollment declines as expected by 2015 while the proportion of students 40 and older increases, distance learning will be a useful tool to meet the distinctive needs of older, "place-bound" students whose demands for supplemental instruction, degree and non-degree studies, classroom formats and teaching methods differ substantially from those of younger students.
- 2.3 OCC continuously updates its curricula to meet changing demographic needs as well as the needs of local business and industry and accreditation requirements of governing bodies. Specific program examples include: Human Services, Recreation Leadership, and Nursing degree programs that prepare graduates for careers in geriatrics, therapeutic recreation, and skilled nursing facilities; Computer Studies has expanded its technical support services and lab availability as a result of a growing population of aging students with little or no background in computing.
 - 2.4 OCC provides training and retraining for the County's growing nontraditional workforce, especially those who are changing careers or who are re-entering the workforce after a sustained absence. OCC educates the workforce on state-of-the-art equipment in the Lean Institute, which integrates technology with modern manufacturing practices;
 - 2.5 Through the State University of New York (SUNY) mission review process and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation process, OCC is committed to specific goals and benchmarks in key academic areas that will impact our ability to address shifting demographics: *As the Onondaga community changes, the College needs to reinvent itself to the extent necessary to meet the needs of a changed society. The College should raise the priority of the activities designed to attract new students and retain them once they choose to attend OCC* (source: 1998 Middle States Accreditation Report).
 - 2.6 OCC is scrutinizing labor market data to determine the most appropriate mix of career and transfer programs to provide graduates for careers most in demand in the central New York region. To meet the demand for highly qualified teachers, OCC is the first community college in New York to offer a transfer program in Teacher Preparation.

PRIORITY ISSUE AREAS

OCC will need to address some priority issue areas to respond to the distinctive needs of the County's aging population in anticipation of 2015:

Strategic planning

Prioritize the needs of the County's aging population not only through long term institution-wide strategic planning (up to three years) but also through short term operational planning at the departmental level (annually).

Student and academic program review

Continuously review, assess, and evaluate existing programs for quality and relevancy; consider adapting current programs or developing new programs to meet the needs of the County's changing demographics; consider adapting current student services to meet the needs of the County's changing demographics.

Access

Enhance OCC's capacity for access through continuous process improvement supplemented by expanded utilization of technology.

ACTIONS AND RESULTS

Priority Issue 2.1 – Strategic Planning

Action: OCC will address the County's aging demographic profile as part of SUNY's mission review process and as part of accreditation processes, including the 2007-08 Middle States site visit.

Result(s): The mission will be updated to the extent deemed warranted by the review process. Strategic planning and enrollment planning will incorporate the needs of the County's aging population to the extent practicable.

Priority Issue 2.1 – Student and Academic Program Review

Action: OCC will realign its academic and student services functions to better serve its traditional population of daytime students as well as its non-traditional population of summer, evening, and off-campus students. The realignment plan includes the creation of a "One-Stop Center" to open in time for the 2005-06 academic year that will combine 10 current departments and services into a single, highly focused center providing admitting, testing, records, academic planning, and student finance services in a single location.

Result(s): The realignment plan, together with the "One-Stop Center" will more effectively meet the needs of our traditional and non-traditional students with fewer hassles and barriers to enrollment.

Priority Issue #2.3 - Access

Action: OCC will introduce five to six complete, on line degree granting programs by the 2005-06 academic year.

Result(s): On-line degree granting programs will be useful tools to meet the distinctive needs of older, "place-bound" students whose demands for supplemental instruction, degree and non-degree studies, classroom formats and teaching methods differ substantially from those of younger students.