

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 126 965

JC 760 417

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 TITLE Community Awareness of Thomas Nelson Community College and Accessibility of Educational Programs: A Survey of the Adult Population of the Virginia Peninsula.
 INSTITUTION Thomas Nelson Community Coll., Hampton, Va.,
 PUB DATE 1 Jun 76
 NOTE 39p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$2.06 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Adults; *College Role; Community Attitudes; Community Colleges; *Community Surveys; *Educational Interest; Educational Needs; Educational Objectives; *Junior Colleges; Needs Assessment

IDENTIFIERS Thomas Nelson Community College

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine levels of citizen awareness of the mission and operations of Thomas Nelson Community College (TNCC), to identify access barriers to potential TNCC attendance, and to assess the educational goals of local residents. A 15-item questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 1,000 local adults. The 381 respondents were typical of mail survey respondents in that they overrepresented upper socioeconomic groups; however, in other respects they were generally characteristic of residents in the TNCC service area. Results indicated a high degree of familiarity with the mission and operations of TNCC and a positive attitude toward the college. They also showed that the chief obstacles to enrolling at TNCC were lack of time and/or interest. Most respondents indicated that their primary goal in attending TNCC would be to satisfy a personal interest or to meet some specific job-related need; interest in degree programs was clearly secondary. Many indicated an interest in self-paced instruction and in televised educational programs. The questionnaire is appended, as are general comments from the respondents. (DC)

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COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF THOMAS NELSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
AND ACCESSIBILITY OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS:
A SURVEY OF THE ADULT POPULATION OF THE VIRGINIA PENINSULA

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June 1, 1976

TC 760 417

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I. PURPOSE

In the process of designing an overall strategy for master planning at Thomas Nelson Community College, the need for systematic information on the community's awareness of the mission and program offerings of the college, as well as the accessibility of the college's programs to adult citizens in the service area, became apparent. The master planning data which was being gathered on demographic and socioeconomic trends on the Peninsula, and on student characteristics and educational programs since the college has been in operation, would not be a sufficient basis to assess the effectiveness of the college in carrying its educational programs to all citizens in the service area.

The purpose of this survey was to describe levels of citizen awareness of the mission and operation of Thomas Nelson Community College, to identify access barriers to potential students at the college, and to assess the educational goals of Peninsula citizens who might be interested in enrolling at the college. This survey was seen as the first in a series of community surveys to identify specific educational program needs of the Peninsula and to evaluate the effectiveness of the college in carrying out its educational mission within the overall system of higher

education in Virginia. Consequently, the survey functioned as a pilot study with all the limitations and exploratory characteristics that such a study typically possesses.

The results of this survey will be incorporated as one element in the data base for master planning at the college. The findings should help the planners identify community needs and formulate specific planning goals and action steps to deal with those needs.

II. PROCEDURES

The survey instrument was developed after reviewing a number of community college constituency surveys previously reported in the research literature. Typically, these surveys were more comprehensive in purpose and scope than the survey reported here.¹ They were designed to gather specific data on the educational program needs of their service areas as well as to assess levels of community awareness of the mission and operations of the colleges. While these community surveys used a variety of research instruments to survey distinct subpopulations in their service areas, they typically included a very general purpose questionnaire to assess levels of citizen awareness of the college's programs and operations. The instrument utilized in the Thomas Nelson study was modeled after these "general population" instruments.

One notable exception to this pattern is the "Survey of Adult Learning" developed by the Educational Testing Service. This massive instrument was used in a general population survey of the St. Louis metropolitan area to uncover the types of things people were learning or

¹For example, see Fred A. Snyder, Community Attitudes Toward the Community College (Harrisburg, Pa.: Harrisburg Area Community College, [197]).

wished to learn on a part-time basis.² Use of this instrument was ruled out because it was too long to be effectively administered by mail, and too expensive to be administered in a survey of households. Also, the instrument did not really address the specific research needs for master planning at Thomas Nelson.

The TNCC questionnaire was designed for use in a mail survey of the adult population of the Peninsula. It consisted of fifteen items which solicited information on the background of the respondent, the respondent's awareness of the mission and operations of the college, the barriers preventing enrollment at Thomas Nelson, the respondent's educational goals, and the respondent's educational needs (see Appendix A). The instrument was pretested in a household survey of twenty residents in Hampton, Newport News, and York County. Minor changes were made in the wording of several items as a result of the evaluations of the interviewers and the comments of a number of respondents.

A sample of one thousand Peninsula residents was randomly drawn from the 1975 Hill Directories for the cities of Hampton, Newport News, and Williamsburg (which included James City County and North York County), and for South York County. It should be noted that the Hill listings generally include all those individuals over eighteen, all those individuals who are employed, and all the businesses within the jurisdiction. Hence, it was not a perfect representation of the universe--all adult citizens in the

²Commission on Non Traditional Study, Survey of Adult Learning (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, [1972]).

service area--although it was the best possible listing of adult citizens available for use in a mail survey.

The questionnaires were mailed together with a self-addressed, business reply envelope. When the rate of returned questionnaires began to drop off significantly, the questionnaire was again sent to the entire sample together with a cover letter (see Attachment B).

The results were tabulated as frequencies for each question in the survey instrument. Background characteristics of the respondents were compared to the general population characteristics of the service area to determine if the respondent sample was representative. Relationships between the background characteristics of the respondents and their responses to the questions concerning awareness, access barriers, educational goals, and felt educational needs were then analyzed through the use of contingency tables.

III. FINDINGS

Description of the Sample

A total of 381 individuals returned the questionnaire, or 38.1 percent of those to whom the questionnaire was mailed. While this return rate was somewhat higher than the normal return rate for a mail survey of the general population with one follow-up, it obviously suggests that a good deal of care needs to be taken in generalizing any of the findings to the total adult population of the Peninsula. Moreover, results from mail surveys always need to be understood as having a bias toward higher socioeconomic groups and toward those groups of individuals who have an interest in the subject being investigated, since these groups are much more likely to return the questionnaire. Therefore, the general demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents will be compared with similar data for the service area of the college to ascertain the representativeness of the sample.

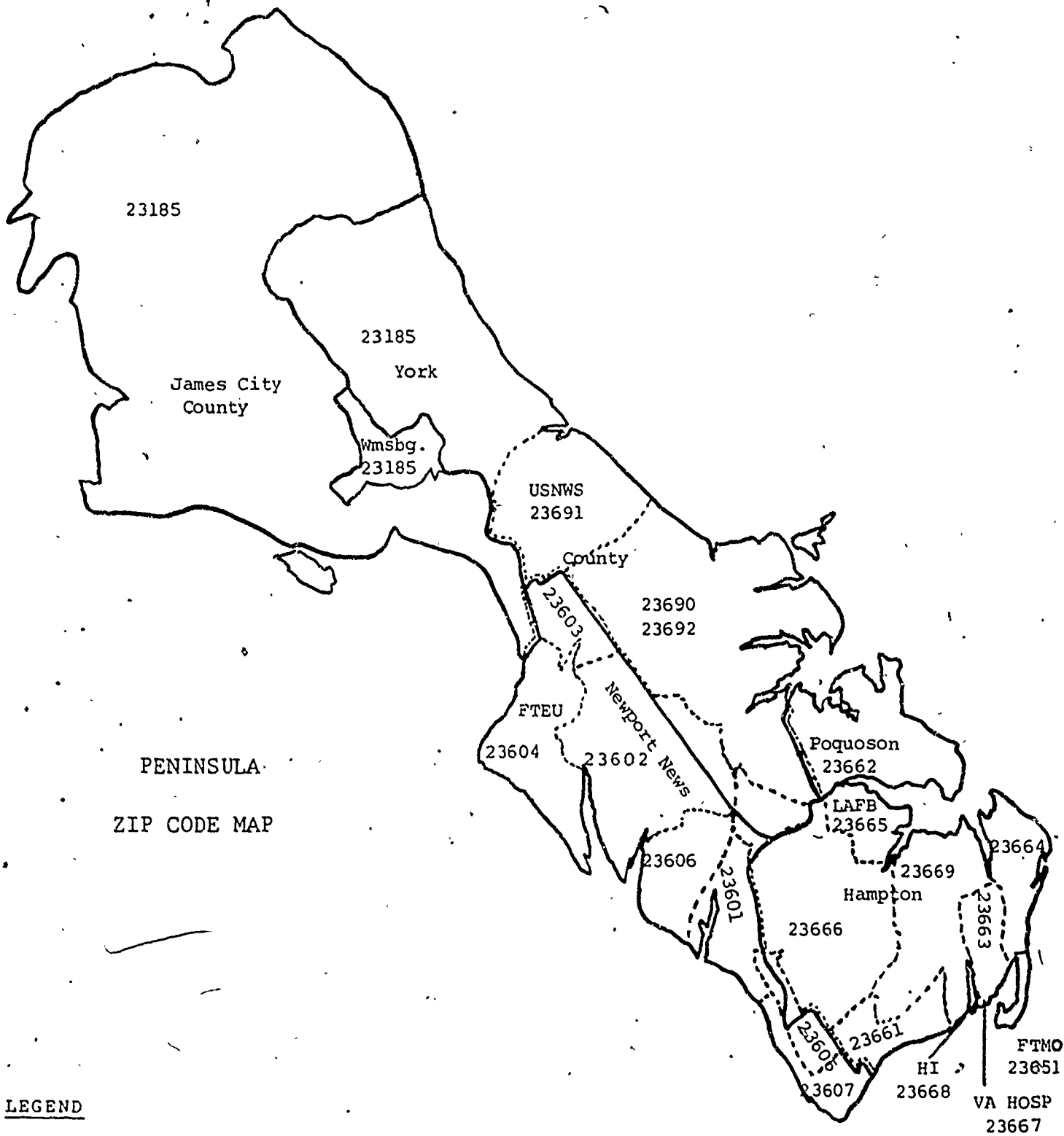
Through an analysis of the distribution of respondents by zip code, the geographical representativeness of the sample can be assessed (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Using 1970 census data, the proportion of the adult population on the Peninsula residing in the areas covered by each of the four Hill Directories was compared with the proportion of the respondents

TABLE 1
 RESPONDENTS BY ZIP CODE COMPARED TO GEOGRAPHICAL
 DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT POPULATION

| | No. of Respondents From Jurisdiction | % of All Respondents in Jurisdiction | % of All Peninsula Adults Living in Jurisdiction* |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <u>Wmsbg., James City</u> | | | |
| <u>County, North York</u> | | | |
| <u>County</u> | | | |
| 23185 | 40 | 10.5 | 11.4 |
| <u>South York County</u> | | | |
| 23690, 23692. | 10 | 2.6 | 7.5 |
| <u>Hampton</u> | | | |
| 23661 Wythe | 21 | 5.6 | |
| 23662 Poquoson | 7 | 1.9 | |
| 23663 Phoebus. | 18 | 4.8 | |
| 23664 Buckroe. | 6 | 1.6 | |
| 23665 Langley A.F.B. | 1 | .3 | |
| 23666 Riverdale. | 44 | 11.7 | |
| 23669 Hampton | 49 | 13.0 | |
| Total Hampton | 146 | 38.8 | 37.2 |
| <u>Newport News</u> | | | |
| 23601 Warwick. | 28 | 7.5 | |
| 23602 Denbigh. | 59 | 15.7 | |
| 23603 Lee Hall | 1 | .3 | |
| 23605 Parkview | 15 | 4.0 | |
| 23606 Hidenwood. | 31 | 8.2 | |
| 23607 Downtown | 42 | 11.2 | |
| Total Newport News | 176 | 46.8 | 43.8 |
| <u>Outside Peninsula</u> | 4 | 1.1 | |
| <u>Total Respondents</u> | 376 | 100 | |
| <u>Missing Values</u> | 5 | | |

*Adult population consists of all individuals eighteen and over.

FIGURE 1



PENINSULA
ZIP CODE MAP

LEGEND

- - - - - zip code boundary
- jurisdiction boundary

from those same jurisdictions. The respondents overrepresent Newport News slightly and underrepresent South York County significantly. The proportions of respondents from Hampton, and from the Williamsburg--James City County--North York County area, closely approximate the proportion of the adult population of the Peninsula living in those areas. Within jurisdictions, the old center city areas of Hampton (the Hampton, 23669, and Phoebus, 23662, zip code areas) and Newport News (the Downtown, 23607, and Parkview, 23605, zip code areas) were well represented in the sample. Overall, the sample had good geographical balance between the jurisdictions and within the jurisdictions.

Data on the sex, age, level of education, and yearly family income of the respondents were compared to corresponding census data for residents of the Peninsula in order to assess the overall demographic and socioeconomic representativeness of the sample. Tables 2 and 3 contain the relevant data and reveal the bias previously suspected of overrepresentation of upper socioeconomic groups. Only 11 percent of the respondents reported that they did not graduate from high school, whereas more than 46 percent of the adults on the Peninsula lack a high school diploma. At the other extreme, 23 percent of our sample reported that they had earned a B. A. or higher level award, whereas only 12 percent of the adults on the Peninsula possess those credentials.

Similarly, less than 15 percent of the respondents reported yearly family incomes less than \$7500 in contrast to over 34 percent of the families on the Peninsula who fall into this category. Again, at the

TABLE 2
RESPONDENTS BY SEX, AGE, EDUCATION, INCOME

Sex

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Male | 158 | 41.8% |
| Female | 220 | 58.2% |
| Missing value. | 3 | |

Age

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Under 21 | 15 | 4.0% |
| 21 - 35 | 156 | 41.4% |
| 36 - 50 | 100 | 26.5% |
| Over 50 | 106 | 28.1% |
| Missing value. | 4 | |

Education

| | | |
|---|-----|-------|
| Completed 8 grades or less. | 17 | 4.5% |
| Attended high school. | 25 | 6.6% |
| High school grad. | 114 | 30.2% |
| Completed some college work | 123 | 32.5% |
| Received associate degree | 12 | 3.2% |
| Received bachelor's degree. | 62 | 16.4% |
| Received master's or higher degree. | 25 | 6.6% |
| Missing value | 3 | |

Yearly Family Income

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Up to \$7,499 | 51 | 14.4% |
| \$7,500 to \$14,999. | 137 | 38.6% |
| \$15,000 and over | 167 | 47.0% |
| Missing value. | 26 | |

TABLE 3

SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF VIRGINIA PENINSULA
1970

| <u>Sex</u> | | <u>Age (Adult Population, 18+)</u> | |
|--|--------|------------------------------------|--------|
| Male | 50.9% | 18 - 20 | 10.9% |
| Female | 49.1% | 21 - 50 : | 62.8% |
| | | 51+ | 26.3% |
| <u>Level of Educational Achievement for Adults</u> | | <u>Yearly Family Income</u> | |
| No School | 1.28% | Under \$7,499 | 34.84% |
| 1 - 11 years | 46.49% | \$7,499 - \$14,999 | 45.77% |
| 12 years | 29.02% | \$15,000+ | 19.39% |
| 13 - 15 years | 11.17% | | |
| 16 years | 7.60% | | |
| 17+ years | 4.45% | | |

other extreme, 47 percent of our sample reported family incomes of \$15,000 and over, whereas this is characteristic of only 19 percent of the families in the service area. It can be argued, no doubt with some validity, that some of this bias may be due to respondent distortion of education and income level, but the differences between the sample and the adult population of the Peninsula were so great that the upper income and education bias of the sample was real.

With respect to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, women were slightly overrepresented as were individuals twenty-one to fifty and over fifty years of age (see Table 3). Yet, the sex and age differences between the respondents and the adult population were similar enough to conclude that the sample was representative in this area.

Data on the employment status of respondents is reported in Table 4. The data reveal good balance in the sample among all categories, with the possible exception of the unemployed. Unemployment on the Peninsula is currently around 6.5 percent of the labor force and, even though the data are not comparable, this group is certainly underrepresented.

Students did not make up an unduly large proportion of the sample and, hence, the respondents represent essentially untapped student potential for the college. This is further supported by the fact that only 15 percent of the respondents had ever taken a course at Thomas Nelson. The sample, then, was not overly biased by individuals who were already very familiar with the college or by individuals who were currently students at another college.

In summary, the respondents were generally representative of the service area geographically and demographically. However, the sample, typical of mail survey samples, was substantially biased toward upper socioeconomic status groups. The sample had good representation among all employment status groups except that the unemployed were underrepresented.

TABLE 4
EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

| | | |
|--------------------|-----|-------|
| Homemaker | 54 | 14.2% |
| Employed Full Time | 222 | 58.3% |
| Employed Part Time | 28 | 7.3% |
| Unemployed | 8 | 2.1% |
| Retired | 38 | 10.0% |
| Full Time Student | 31 | 8.1% |

Respondents' Knowledge About TNCC

Three questions in the instrument dealt with the respondents' knowledge about the purposes of and the admission requirements for Thomas Nelson. Data for those questions are reported in Table 5. Generally, the respondents were basically familiar with the mission of the college since almost 40 percent of the sample checked the correct categories (Items 2, 3, and 4 under Mission). Only 5 percent confused TNCC's mission with that of a four year college (Item 1) and another 35 percent checked combinations which were incorrect or incomplete. Yet, over 61 percent of the sample

TABLE 5

RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE COLLEGE'S
MISSION AND ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

| <u>Mission</u> | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| 1. Offers a four-year college degree. | 18 | 5.0% |
| 2. Offers two-year degree transfer programs | 29 | 8.1% |
| 3. Offers two-year occupational-technical degree programs | 43 | 12.0% |
| 4. Offers non-credit community service programs. | 3 | .8% |
| 5. Checked 2, 3, and 4 above. | 140 | 39.2% |
| 6. All other combinations | 124 | 34.7% |
| 7. Missing values | 24 | |
| <u>Image</u> | | |
| 1. Just another college offering the same pro- grams which other colleges have | 29 | 8.1% |
| 2. Offers a variety of programs to meet the educational needs of the community. | 302 | 83.9% |
| 3. Primarily offers people a place to go if they can't get into another college | 29 | 8.1% |
| 4. Missing values | 21 | |
| <u>Admission Requirements</u> | | |
| 1. Must have a high school diploma. | 107 | 30.1% |
| 2. Must have been a good student and graduated in top half of class. | 3 | .8% |
| 3. Must be 18 and be able to benefit from programs or have a high school diploma or its equal. | 245 | 69.0% |
| 4. Missing values | 26 | |

checked either the correct combination of items or checked one of the correct items that make up the college's mission. Considering the complex nature of the mission of a comprehensive community college, the level of knowledge of the respondents about that mission is fairly impressive. However, the upper socioeconomic bias of the sample probably exaggerates the real level of knowledge about TNCC's mission among citizens in the service area.

The second question reported on in Table 5 dealt with the respondent's image of the college. An overwhelming proportion of the sample (84 percent) reported a positive attitude about Thomas Nelson's efforts to meet the educational needs of the community. Only 8 percent of the respondents reported a somewhat negative image of the college as a second rate institution (Item 3 under Image) and another 8 percent indicated that they were unable to distinguish TNCC's mission from that of any other college. Reinforcing this positive attitude about the college is the fact that out of twenty-nine individuals who offered comments concerning the overall quality of the programs at Thomas Nelson, twenty-six of them (90 percent) were very favorable. This positive image of the college must, however, be tempered by the knowledge that mail survey responses tend to be biased towards those who are more favorably disposed about the subject matter in the survey.

The last question reported on in Table 5 concerned the respondents' knowledge of the admission requirements for TNCC. A substantial majority of the respondents (69 percent) were familiar with the college's admission

requirements (Item 3). The remainder of the sample thought a high school diploma was necessary for admission, with the exception of less than 1 percent of the respondents who indicated that enrollment was restricted to a select group of high school graduates.

Respondents' knowledge about the times and locations of course offerings are reported in Table 6. Virtually everyone (94 percent) knew that the college offers courses at night and Saturday mornings as well as in the daytime. However, 60 percent of the sample either did not know at what locations courses were being offered, or thought that courses were only offered at the Big Bethel Road, Hampton campus. Since only 15 percent of the respondents had ever taken courses at Thomas Nelson, the lack of knowledge about the locations of course offerings is not too surprising. It seems that respondents knew a good deal more about when courses were offered than they did about where courses were offered.

In summary, knowledge concerning the mission of the college is fairly accurate and the image of the college throughout the community is very positive. While most individuals were familiar with the times of operation of the college, a substantial majority were unfamiliar with the scope of the college's operation throughout the Peninsula.

Educational Needs of Respondents

Three remaining questions in the survey solicited information on the barriers preventing enrollment at Thomas Nelson, on the educational goals of those interested in enrolling, and on possible expansion of locations and program offerings. The results for each of these questions are discussed

TABLE 6

RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE
COLLEGE'S OPERATIONS

| <u>Times of Operations</u> | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| 1. Offers classes during day hours only . . | 10 | 2.7% |
| 2. Offers classes day, night, and Saturday morning. | 351 | 93.6% |
| 3. Don't know | 14 | 3.7% |
| 4. Missing values | 6 | |
| <u>Locations</u> | | |
| 1. Offers courses at several off-campus locations throughout the Peninsula. . | 143 | 38.3% |
| 2. Offers courses only at the Big Bethel Road, Hampton campus. | 150 | 40.2% |
| 3. Don't know | 80 | 21.4% |
| 4. Missing values | 8 | |

separately and then summarized at the end of this section.

Respondents were asked to check the primary barrier preventing their attendance at the college, and the results are reported in Table 7. Most respondents (38 percent) indicated that they simply did not have the time to continue their formal education, and this was as true for women as it was for men. Second in importance was a lack of interest in further education (21 percent) followed by a failure on the part of those who have already earned a college degree to see how the programs at Thomas Nelson could be of any service (11 percent). Again, there were no real differences between the sexes except that the lack of interest in further education was slightly more typical of men than of women.

Not unexpectedly, child care was a barrier listed only by women in the survey, but it was not one of the major barriers to women in this sample--it was tied for seventh out of nine options. Also of some interest is the fact that 54 percent of the individuals who listed transportation as a barrier to further education at Thomas Nelson lived in the Downtown (23607) and Parkview (23605) areas of Newport News and the Wythe section of Hampton (23661). Again, this was not a very significant barrier to individuals in this sample (seventh out of nine options). The fact that transportation, child care, and financial problems did not emerge as major barriers was at least partially because of the upper socioeconomic bias of the sample.

The educational goals for all respondents who were interested in taking courses at Thomas Nelson are reported on in Table 8. Most respondents (42 percent) indicated that their goal in attending Thomas

TABLE 7

ACCESS BARRIERS TO ENROLLING AT TNCC

| | Total | | Men | | Women | |
|---|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Health | 12 | 3.5% | 2 | 1.4% | 10 | 5.0% |
| No time | 130 | 38.2% | 54 | 38.8% | 75 | 37.7% |
| Too costly | 19 | 5.6% | 1 | .7% | 18 | 9.0% |
| No personal transportation . | 13 | 3.8% | 5 | 3.6% | 8 | 4.0% |
| Child care problems | 8 | 2.4% | 0 | 0.0% | 8 | 4.0% |
| Not interested in TNCC . . . | 8 | 2.4% | 3 | 2.2% | 5 | 2.5% |
| Not interested in taking any courses | 72 | 21.2% | 33 | 23.7% | 39 | 19.6% |
| Already have college education | 36 | 10.6% | 23 | 16.5% | 13 | 6.5% |
| Currently attending college. | 42 | 12.4% | 18 | 12.9% | 23 | 11.6% |
| Missing values | 41 | | | | | |

NOTE: Numbers may not total to 381 in all cases since sex data were not available for all respondents to this question.

Nelson would be, "to satisfy a personal interest," and this was the goal listed most frequently for all categories of respondents. A need, "to develop new skills in order to get a new job," (17 percent) and a need, "to upgrade my skills in my present job," (13 percent) ranked second and third among the educational goals, although they fell far behind, "to satisfy a personal interest", in the frequency of response.

There were no substantial differences between men and women in the rank order of educational goals. However, women were more interested in earning an associate degree for a new career, whereas men were interested in the associate degree more in terms of transferring to a four year college.

The rank order of the goals was significantly different when comparisons were made across age groups. Younger respondents seemed to be more "degree" oriented, whereas older respondents were more interested in the "continuing education" goals. For example, the associate degree related goals ranked second and third for those individuals under twenty-one, while those same goals ranked fourth and fifth for those thirty-six to fifty. For the most part, those respondents who checked "other" goals listed very specific course or degree program needs, such as recertification for teachers and specialized courses in foreign languages.

The last question in the survey solicited the respondents' preferences for future "branch" locations of Thomas Nelson and their interest in non-traditional program offerings. The results are reported

TABLE 8

RESPONDENTS' EDUCATIONAL GOALS

| | Total | Men | Women | Under 21 | 21-35 | 36-50 | Over 50 |
|---|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Personal interest | 119 41.5% | 49 41.2% | 67 40.6% | 7 58.3% | 38 28.6% | 34 41.5% | 38 66.7% |
| Develop new skills for a new job. | 48 16.7% | 18 15.1% | 30 18.2% | 1 8.3% | 28 21.1% | 15 18.3% | 4 7.0% |
| Upgrade skills for present job. | 49 12.9% | 24 20.2% | 25 15.2% | 0 0.0% | 21 15.8% | 21 25.6% | 6 10.5% |
| Earn associate degree for new career | 33 11.5% | 9 7.6% | 24 14.5% | 2 16.7% | 24 18.0% | 3 3.7% | 4 7.0% |
| Earn associate degree for transfer | 21 7.3% | 10 8.4% | 11 6.7% | 2 16.7% | 10 7.5% | 8 9.8% | 1 1.8% |
| Other | 12 4.2% | 7 5.9% | 5 3.0% | 0 0.0% | 9 6.8% | 1 1.2% | 2 3.5% |
| Not interested in further education. | 5 1.7% | 2 1.7% | 3 1.8% | 0 0.0% | 3 2.3% | 0 0.0% | 2 3.5% |
| Missing value | 94 | | | | | | |

NOTE: Numbers may not total to 381 in all cases since sex and age data were not available for all respondents to this question.

in Table 9. With respect to possible future "branches", 27 percent indicated a preference for a downtown Newport News campus, whereas 17 percent indicated a preference for a branch in Williamsburg, James City County. Among residents of downtown Newport News and the adjoining areas of Hampton (the Downtown, 23607; Parkview, 23605; and Wythe, 23661 zip code areas) thirty-nine (46 percent) suggested a branch location in their area. Similarly, twenty-one (53 percent) of the respondents who lived in the Williamsburg--James City County--North York County area (23185) suggested a branch location for the college in their area. As for those individuals who suggested other locations, their preferences were scattered over a wide area with no one location drawing any significant support.

With respect to the respondents' interest in the non-traditional program items, 29 percent expressed an interest in televised course offerings and 35 percent favored the development of self-paced courses and programs. Among those who offered other suggestions, twelve individuals (48 percent) recommended that the college concentrate on doing a good job with its present resources and locations and, if need be, expand the present campus.

Finally, there was an opportunity on the questionnaire for the respondent to make further comments. As previously mentioned, most of the comments were generally favorable remarks about the programs and operation of the college. The remaining comments tended to be rather specific statements about individual educational needs. An edited

TABLE 9
RESPONDENTS' SUGGESTIONS

| | | |
|---|-----|-------|
| Open branch campus in downtown Newport News | 101 | 26.5% |
| Open branch campus in Williamsburg, James City County. | 63 | 16.5% |
| Open branch campuses elsewhere. | 30 | 7.9% |
| Offer programs over educational television | 109 | 28.6% |
| Take more active role in community. | 78 | 20.5% |
| Develop self-paced courses and programs | 132 | 34.6% |
| Other suggestions | 25 | 6.6% |

NOTE: Respondents could check more than one item.

23
27

listing of the comments is included in Appendix C.

Generally, the results from this portion of the survey have provided some insight into the educational needs of the Peninsula. For one thing, the chief obstacles to enrolling at Thomas Nelson were not economic.

Rather, respondents complained of a lack of time and a lack of interest.

For another, most respondents indicated that their primary goal in attending the college would either be to satisfy a personal interest or to meet some specific job related need. Importantly, interest in degree programs--vocational-technical and transfer--was secondary. There was also a good deal of interest in self-paced instruction and televised educational programs.

With respect to possible locations for a branch campus, there was substantial interest in both a downtown Newport News branch as well as a branch campus in Williamsburg, James City County. However, that interest was not confined to the residents of those particular areas. Again, it is important to emphasize that these findings are biased toward the needs of upper socioeconomic status groups.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this community survey have provided some understanding of the educational needs and aspirations of the adult population on the Virginia Peninsula and have aided in identifying other areas for research. Moreover, the research process has provided experience which should improve the overall design of future community studies.

A good deal of caution needs to be exercised in generalizing the findings to the survey universe. Respondents were typical of mail survey respondents in that they overrepresented upper socioeconomic groups. Moreover, they were probably better informed about the college and more interested in its programs than the average adult citizen on the Peninsula. However, in other respects they were generally characteristic of residents in the service area.

Given the sample biases previously noted, there seems to be a high degree of familiarity with the mission and operations of the college among Peninsula residents. This familiarity is accompanied by a positive attitude about Thomas Nelson. Respondents did not exhibit an exaggerated image of the admission requirements, nor did they seem to,

confuse the role of a comprehensive community college with that of four-year colleges in the area. In all, the level of citizen awareness of, and support for, Thomas Nelson is quite high.

While the level of community awareness is high, the interest in and the potential for enrolling at the college seems to be somewhat limited. The findings seem to indicate that most adults in the service area are not highly motivated to continue their formal education. This was reflected in the survey results by the fact that over 60 percent of the respondents specified lack of time or lack of interest as the chief barrier preventing their enrollment. Undoubtedly, many of these people have educational needs which have simply not been adequately articulated. Lack of time and interest might be regarded as implying lack of information or motivation. The college might attempt to stimulate interest in "continuing education" through a public relations program to inform area residents of the scope of educational services that are currently available at the college.

There is substantial interest in branch campuses in downtown Newport News and in the Williamsburg-James City County area. Although very few individuals indicated that transportation was a major barrier preventing their enrollment at the college, a good many apparently felt that a branch campus in their area would better serve their needs. Perhaps this is simply a preference for more programs in their own neighborhoods or job locations.

The educational goals of Peninsula residents can best be

described as "continuing education." Most of the respondents stated that their goals were either to satisfy a personal interest or to meet some specific job-related need. This finding suggests that in the future, more students at the college will be "continuing education" students rather than "occupational-technical" or "transfer" degree aspirants. The findings also demonstrate that this trend is directly related to the steady increase in the median age of first time students at Thomas Nelson.

There is significant interest in non-traditional instructional alternatives among Peninsula residents. This interest is probably related to the educational goals previously discussed in that continuing education students require a more flexible instructional mode to accommodate their work and family responsibilities.

Finally, the experience with this mail survey demonstrates the need for a more representative community sample if the full dimension of the educational needs of the service area are to be understood and defined. The response rate must either be greatly improved in future community surveys through more elaborate follow up techniques, or a household survey must be conducted in order to reach citizens whose needs and aspirations are not reflected in this survey because they did not respond. These appear to be the economically and educationally disadvantaged, who have low levels of information about the college. In addition, a business and industry survey needs to be undertaken since the results of a general survey of this kind do not provide much direction

for long range curriculum planning at the college. Nevertheless, the findings reported here have given definition to the educational needs and interests of Peninsula residents.

APPENDIX A
COMMUNITY SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Thomas Nelson Community College wants your opinion ...

...Because we are working on our Master Plan for the programs and services we will offer in the next 5 to 10 years. We have chosen your name at random from one of the city directories in our service area. We need to know something about you, what you know about the college, and how you feel we can be of service to you.

Because mailing costs are high, the number of people we have mailed this questionnaire to is quite small. So, no matter what your age, walk of life, or what you know about TNCC, YOUR response is very important to us. Please take the next 10 minutes to check the boxes and fill in the blanks. If you are not sure about an answer, give us your best guess. When you have finished, fold this sheet and put it in the enclosed envelope. WE WILL PAY THE POSTAGE.

THANK YOU!

1. Your zip code: _____

2. Your sex: male female

3. Your current age: under 21 21 to 35 36 to 50 over 50.

4. Your level of education as of September, 1975:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> completed 8 grades or less | <input type="checkbox"/> completed some college work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> attended high school | <input type="checkbox"/> received associate degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high school graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> received bachelor's degree |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> received master's or higher degree |

5. You are presently:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a homemaker | <input type="checkbox"/> unemployed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> employed full time | <input type="checkbox"/> retired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> employed part time | <input type="checkbox"/> a student (full time) |

6. Please check your yearly FAMILY income:

- up to \$7,499
 \$7,500 to \$14,999
 \$15,000 and over

7. Have you ever taken a course at Thomas Nelson Community College?

- yes no

8. Check ALL of the following statements about Thomas Nelson Community College which you BELIEVE to be true:

- offers a four year college degree.
- offers two-year degree programs which lead to transfer to a four-year college.
- offers two-year degree programs which train people for immediate careers in the fields of business, engineering, health sciences, and public services.
- offers non-credit educational programs to meet the needs of the community and to provide an opportunity for personal development.

9. TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE, Thomas Nelson Community College,

(CHECK ONE)

- offers classes during day hours only.
- offers classes day, night, and Saturday morning.

(CHECK ONE)

- offers courses at several off-campus locations throughout the Peninsula.
- offers courses only at the Big Bethel Road, Hampton campus.
- CHECK HERE IF YOU ARE NOT AT ALL FAMILIAR WITH THE COLLEGE.

10. AS FAR AS YOU KNOW, in order to take a course at Thomas Nelson you must:

(CHECK ONE)

- have a high school diploma
- have been a good student in high school and graduated in the top half of your class.
- be at least 18 years old and be able to benefit from the programs at the college, OR have a high school diploma or its equal.

11. IN YOUR OPINION, Thomas Nelson Community College:

(CHECK ONE)

- is just another college offering the same programs which other colleges have.
- offers a variety of programs to meet the educational needs of our community.
- primarily provides people with a place to go if they cannot get into any other college

12. Check the following statement which best describes why you are NOT currently taking courses at Thomas Nelson.

- My health makes it hard to attend school.
- I simply do not have the time to take courses in addition to my family/work responsibilities.
- I could not afford the cost of \$10-\$30 a course to attend school on a part time basis.
- I do not have my own transportation to get out to the college.
- I cannot find (or afford) a responsible person to care for my children.
- I am not interested in taking any courses at Thomas Nelson although I would like to take courses at another school.
- I am not interested in taking any courses.
- I already have a college education and don't know how your programs would be of service to me.
- I am currently attending another college. (Please state where) _____

13. If you are interested in taking courses at Thomas Nelson Community College, what would be your goal in doing so?

- to satisfy a personal interest.
- to develop new skills in order to get a new job.
- to upgrade my skills in my present job.
- to earn an associate degree and move into a more satisfying career.
- to earn an associate degree and transfer to a four year college.
- other, (please state) _____

14. Please check ALL of the statements below that you agree with. Thomas Nelson Community College should:

- open a branch campus in downtown Newport News.
- open a branch campus in the Williamsburg, James City County area.
- open courses and student services at locations other than the Big Bethel Road, Hampton campus. (Please list where.) _____
- offer programs over educational television.
- take a more active role in helping the community solve problems.
- develop courses and programs which allow the individual to work at his own speed.
- other suggestions _____

15. Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please make any comments you wish to make in the space below.

If you would like a copy of our survey results, please give us your name and address.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

APPENDIX B
SURVEY FOLLOW-UP LETTER

REMINDER:

You should have received a copy of this survey at least a week ago. If you have already returned it to us, please accept our thanks and disregard this reminder and the enclosed survey form.

However, if you have not had the time to do it, or if you have misplaced it, please take a few minutes to complete the survey, which we have enclosed for your convenience. This information is very important to us. Thomas Nelson Community College sincerely wants your opinion to help in planning its programs and services for the future.



THANK YOU!

APPENDIX C

GENERAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

1. Suggestions for specific programs:
 - a. Offer music and theatre arts.
 - b. Offer consumer education courses in buying, restoring, and repairing homes; also in gardening, sewing, and crafts.
 - c. Offer courses in maritime history and navigation.
 - d. Offer credit courses in horticulture.
2. Hire professors who have more time for students.
3. Objection to driving so far.
4. Specific negative comments:
 - a. Head nurse concerned with limited clinical experience given nursing students in two year program, but impressed with individual attention given students in long term clinical area.
 - b. One person had to enter nursing program at Riverside because she was told there would be a two year wait to get into the program at TNCC. Feels TNCC should widen program.
5. Make easier access to college by way of Interstate 64.
6. General needs:
 - a. Have courses for people who have difficult work hours.
 - b. Need more courses for personal satisfaction.
 - c. Need more guidance to help people decide which courses will satisfy their needs.
 - d. Need to find methods to encourage people to attend college. Perhaps SGA could sponsor activities that would accomplish this.
 - e. Need program for people without high school diploma.
 - f. Need more information in community about TNCC.
7. Comments about size and location of TNCC:
 - a. Don't branch out to different campuses--lose personal contact with

students.

- b. Need downtown Newport News campus - public transportation at night (two comments).
 - c. Expand present campus - more parking, classrooms, etc.
 - d. Because of poor transportation and decay of downtown Newport News, not wise to put branch campus there.
8. Adult Education courses are a great benefit to people who ordinarily don't get to go to college and especially to older people.
 9. General, favorable comments based on personal experience at TNCC (four comments).
 10. General, favorable comments about TNCC and the community college concept, not based on personal experience (twenty-two comments).

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