

OCC asks non-returning students: why?

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Lots of students enroll at Oakland Community College in fall, but 40 percent don't come back in January. OCC officials openly wonder if the college somehow is letting down the non-returners.

There are several answers, said Gerald Faye, reporting on a survey of 545 non-returners. In a nutshell:

- The traditional students (age 18-24) were more likely to cite job and finances.
- Older students and women were more likely to cite family problems or negative experiences.

"Most who didn't return satisfied their expectations or have a job," Faye concluded, but he had some preliminary ideas of what could be improved for those who had bad experiences at OCC.

"COUNSELING HAS to change. Peer counseling is something we've gotta look at."

"I'm concerned at the lack of faculty interaction (with non-returners). I'm faculty, and I'm criticizing myself and others. It's not unique to OCC," said Faye, a veteran political science professor on the Orchard

Ridge Campus.

He did the study with Dr. James Berry of the Orchard Ridge psychology faculty.

Their survey, with a 95 percent confidence level, covered 545 of a sample of 800 non-returning students. Eleven declined telephone interviews, and 244 couldn't be contacted.

Some 15 percent expected to return to OCC in another year, he said. The study covered only one semester and will be continued as the college changes its counseling and screening programs.

CHIEF CONCERN of college officials is a perceived pattern of "alienation," both academically and socially, Faye reported.

- 49 percent had never had a conference with a faculty member.
- 63 percent had never had a conference with a counselor.
- 44 percent had failed to make one "close friend" at OCC.

- Only 3 percent took part in any student activities.

Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson initiated the study, particularly stressing the social alienation factor. His message is that good courses aren't enough if a student feels he or

she isn't part of the campus scene.

EX-STUDENTS cited some "positive" reasons for not returning, Faye said. Ten percent said their OCC goal had been met, and 18 percent transferred to a four-year college — a total of 28 percent "positive."

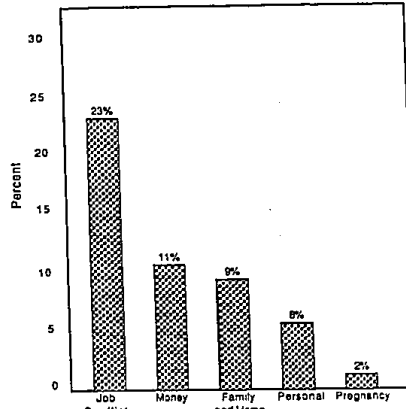
Another 51 percent cited "life" reasons. The breakdown:

- 23 percent had a job conflict.
- 11 percent ran short of money.
- 9 percent gave home and family reasons.
- 5 percent cited personal reasons.
- 2 percent cited pregnancy.
- And 11 percent gave "negative" reasons — a course wasn't available (6), academic problems (3), and registration process (2).

IN AGE AND sex, the non-returning students were fairly close to OCC averages.

The non-returners, however, had attempted fewer credit hours (5.1 vs. 7.1), had actually earned fewer credits (4.1 vs. 7.0) and received less financial aid (4 vs. 12 percent of total).

The grade point average of non-returners was 3.1 vs. 3.3 for those who returned.



Of 545 students who didn't return to Oakland Community College for a second semester, 51 percent cited these "life" reasons for their decision. The graph was prepared by two college faculty members.

Regional economy slips in October

In October, the Detroit Area Business Activity Index slipped three points to a level of 145 compared with 148 in September.

"This three-point decline almost exclusively reflects the decline in local auto sales and a reduction in the average hourly work week in manufacturing," said David L. Littmann, economist with Manufacturers Bank.

Even with October's decline, the local economy is up 3.6 percent from one year ago and is operating 1.5 percent ahead of the comparable 10-month period in 1986. These gains are measured after having removed the distorting effects of inflation.

"October's decline in seasonally adjusted auto sales was partially

offset by gains in electric power consumption, auto and truck output, the real volume of financial transactions and the highest local steel output for the year.

"Especially noteworthy is the fact that despite a 10-percent fall in U.S. auto sales this year, the Detroit-area economy has fared quite well and has just completed its fifth consecutive year of expansion," Littmann said.

The Detroit Area Business Activity Index is compiled monthly from eight different measures of regional activity and is seasonally adjusted, corrected for inflation, and expressed on an index basis with 1982 as base year equal to 100.

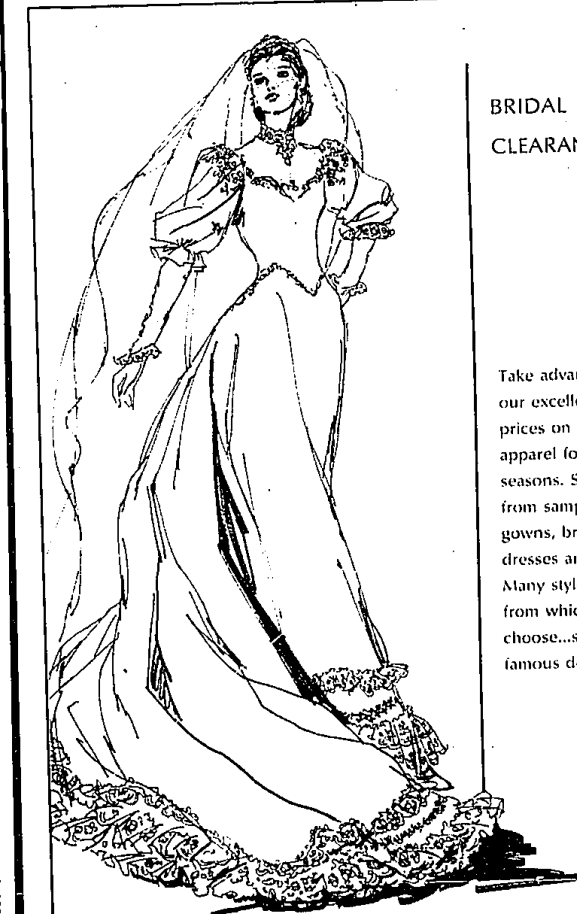
Historian's topics: King, Malcolm X

Vincent Harding, author and historian, will speak at 2:30 p.m. Monday, on "Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Today's Truly Disadvantaged."

His free public lecture will be in the Gold Room of the Oakland Center on campus near Rochester. Class visitations by junior high students have been arranged.

Harding's talk is sponsored by OU's history department and the King-Parks-Chavez program, which is funded by the state Legislature.

Harding was first director of the King Memorial Center in Atlanta and currently teaches at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver. He is author of "There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America."



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