

What South County residents want from Cabrillo

By JESSE CHAVARRIA
STAFF WRITER

South County residents would like to see more classes in computers, business and Spanish offered in Watsonville, according to results of a Cabrillo College survey released today.

Residents of the South County would also prefer it if the classes were offered weekday mornings or evenings at Watsonville High School.

The survey was taken by college administrators who are trying to figure out a way to serve the South County better and increase Cabrillo's enrollment figures.

They hope to recruit more students — particularly Hispanics — from Watsonville.

About 270 people completed the questionnaire, which was distributed at various locations in Watsonville, including City Hall, the Chamber of Commerce, Watsonville Community Hospital and the Board of Realtors offices.

More than half the people who completed the survey were

from Watsonville.

The biggest response came at the hospital and City Hall sites.

Survey results show that the vast majority of respondents are interested in taking credit rather than non-credit courses.

The courses that got the biggest support were computer classes, business and Spanish.

English was next highest in demand, followed by psychology and art courses.

Office skills, history, math and political science filled out the top ten subject requests.

Respondents apparently have little use for Chicano History, Russian or nursing and medical courses as those courses got few requests.

Cabrillo's vice president for instruction, Grace Mitchell, said administrators were not surprised by the results.

"We expected the higher interest in business and educational classes," she said.

"The reasons we did the survey was to find out the extent of interest. The results have shown very clearly what the people want," she said. "It

gives us a much stronger sense of what is needed."

She added the college would mobilize quickly and try and add the business courses to its spring schedule. She said the computer courses would take longer to schedule because of the specialized needs for class equipment.

A section of the survey asked people what the most convenient place for them to take a class would be.

Watsonville High School was the overwhelming selection. The Elks Club, Watsonville Senior Center and the Kennedy Youth Center were also rated highly favorable locations for classes.

Mitchell said the college is looking at using various sites in the future, particularly the YWCA and the Watsonville Library.

Most of the survey respondents identified themselves as Caucasians. Less than 10 percent of the respondents said they were Hispanics — the area targeted by college administrators.

Asked if she was disappointed more Hispanics did not take part in the survey, Mitchell said no.

She explained Cabrillo would keep surveying the area and hoped to target businesses that employ Hispanics.

She said the survey was part of an ongoing effort to reach out to the South County.

"We were going to go out to the canneries this week, but cancelled those plans for obvious reasons," she said, a reference to the strike that began Monday.

Most respondents listed their ages as between 25 and 50. Only a small percentage was under 24 years of age.

Mitchell said those results were in line with the college population. She said the average age of Cabrillo students is about 27.

Supplemental information on survey results show that the respondents find out about new Cabrillo College programs from three sources: college brochures, friends and the Register-Pajaronian.