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Factors that Influence Students to Enroll into Teletechnet Programs

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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS
TO ENROLL INTO TELETECHNET PROGRAMS

A Research Paper

Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Department of Occupational and Technical Studies
At Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree

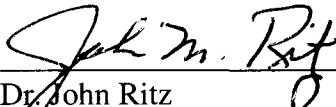
By

Elaine Ward

August 2002

APPROVAL PAGE

This research study was prepared by Elaine Ward under the direction of Dr. John Ritz for OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree.

Approval By: 
Dr. John Ritz
Advisor and Graduate Program Director

Date: 8-16-02

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Elaine Hardin Ward

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Old Dominion University is a state supported school in Norfolk, Virginia, that was founded in 1930 as the Norfolk Division of the College of William and Mary. The University is comprised of six colleges: the College of Arts and Letters, the College of Business and Public Administration, the Darden College of Education, the College of Engineering and Technology, the College of Health Science and the College of Sciences.

“In 1992, Old Dominion University began development of an instructional television network, TELETECHNET, to deliver the upper division coursework for baccalaureate programs to community college sites in the Commonwealth of Virginia” (http://www.calstate.edu/special_projects/mediated_instr/teletch/TnetSum.html).

TELETECHNET is an interactive distance learning educational system that has revolutionized higher education. TELETECHNET is designed for students to attend Old Dominion University part-time, who may be working full-time and encountering other responsibilities. TELETECHNET students complete their first two years of college coursework through local community colleges or other accredited institutions and then complete coursework at Old Dominion University to receive their bachelor’s or master’s degree.

“Through 21st-century technology, Old Dominion University is able to provide cost-effective, high-quality education. Using satellites, computers and landlines, Old Dominion University delivers courses in partnership with community colleges, military installations, and corporations throughout Virginia and other states. Synchronous, one- and two-way video and audio make it possible for students to interact with their

TELETECHNET instructors and other students. This system affords students numerous benefits of an on-campus education without the logistical problems associated with leaving home” (Old Dominion University TELETECHNET Brochure).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors of why students are enrolling in undergraduate degree programs offered by Old Dominion University via their distance learning educational system, TELETECHNET, on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College.

RESEARCH GOALS

Through the analysis of the problem statement it was evident that the following objectives would need to be established to successfully identify the factors of why students enrolled at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site.

1. Identify the factors that influence student enrollment at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site.
2. Identify the population of students enrolling at the TELETECHNET program in regards to age and occupation.
3. Project the graduation rate of those students enrolling at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College during the Spring 2002 semester.
4. Conclude what is the most popular degree program(s) at the TELETECHNET site.
5. Recommend factors for focusing the marketing of Old Dominion University TELETECHNET programs at Southwest Virginia Community College.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Southwest Virginia Community College was established in 1968 as part of the Virginia Community College System. SVCC is a two-year institution that serves the counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell and Tazewell. Southwest Virginia Community College is located in the Appalachian Mountains where mining is the primary source of employment.

Old Dominion University established a site at Southwest Virginia Community College in August 1994 with thirteen baccalaureate degrees offered. There were five concentration areas available in the Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration such as Accounting, Finance, Information Systems, Management, and Marketing. Also available were the Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice, Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Technology, Health Sciences, Human Services Counseling, Nursing, and Professional Communications. Over time there were additional degree programs added for a total of sixteen.

With the introduction of the Internet, higher education has taken on a whole new role. Students can now complete college degrees from a host of institutions via a variety of delivery methods. Old Dominion University primarily uses one-way video and two-way audio to deliver their courses. This study came about due to the overwhelming availability of degree programs individuals can participate in to complete a post-secondary or graduate degree.

The importance of the study was to provide the administrators of the TELETECHNET program with valuable information as to why students are choosing this type of delivery method to complete their undergraduate degree. The study is also of

importance so to actualize the graduation rate of individuals who started the program in regard to retention information.

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations were applied to this study:

1. This study was limited to only those students who attended the Southwest Virginia Community College site for TELETECHNET in the SPRING 2002 semester.
2. The population of students selected to determine the graduation rate was from the Spring 2002 semester.
3. This study was limited to only those degree programs offered at the undergraduate level.
4. This study was conducted to determine only those factors involved in the decision making process for attendance at the TELETECHNET site at Southwest Virginia Community College.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were found to be true:

1. The students in this study were capable of determining the factors involved in their decision making process for attending the TELETECHNET site at Southwest Virginia Community College.
2. The results from this study will provide adequate information to the site personnel in regard to successful marketing techniques used in future recruitment for the program.

PROCEDURES

A questionnaire was developed asking the students a series of questions dealing with what were the factors that influenced their decision making process in deciding to attend the TELETECHNET site at Southwest Virginia Community College in order to complete their baccalaureate degree. The questionnaire was distributed to those students currently enrolled in the SPRING 2002 semester with Old Dominion University with no regard to age or sex. The questionnaire was distributed to the students by mailing it to their home address provided by the TELETECHNET site personnel. A cover letter was included in the packet that was distributed to the students explaining the purpose of the study and asking for their complete cooperation. A self-address stamped envelope was included in the packet for adequate return of the questionnaire.

The results were then collected, tabulated and analyzed to determine what factors are involved in the decision making process of students enrolling in an Old Dominion University undergraduate degree program at the Southwest Virginia Community College site. This information will be analyzed to determine the most effective approach to use for future marketing of the programs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms associated with this study were defined to provide clarity of meaning:

1. Andragogy – the study of adults.
2. Decision Making Process – a process used to make a decision regarding a lifestyle event.
3. Distance Learning – the delivery of instruction to the right group of people at the right time in the right place. The educator and the learner may be

separated by time, distance, or both. It may or may not include technology (http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/Distance_Learning.asp).

4. Old Dominion University – a state supported university located in Norfolk, Virginia.
5. TELETECHNET – an interactive distance learning program utilizing the technology of satellite, landlines, audio and video equipment to deliver courses to distant sites.
6. Undergraduate – a student at the college or university level who has not completed a baccalaureate degree.

OVERVIEW

Chapter I provided the necessary background information about the study of the factors that influence students to enroll in a degree program at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College. Also provided was the background information and an introduction of Old Dominion University that laid the groundwork for introducing the TELETECHNET program. The purpose of the study was stated along with the research goals, limitations, assumptions, and procedures that will be used through this project. Also of importance was the listing of the definition of terms that will provide an understanding to some of the unfamiliar language that may be used in the study.

Chapter II will provide a review of the literature that is available on the topic of distance learning and adult learners choosing an alternative method to complete their degree. Chapter III is on the methods and procedures used to collect the data for the

study. Chapter IV will provide the findings of the questionnaires that were distributed. Chapter V will provide the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Students now have the opportunity to obtain baccalaureate degrees in which the majority of coursework is obtained at a distance through electronic means of instruction” (Curry, Baldwin, & Sharpe, 1998, p. 42). With the ever-increasing demand of alternative means of degree completion, colleges and universities need to rethink how they deliver instruction. The traditional way of delivering post-secondary education is not meeting the needs of adult learners. According to Linder, Dooley, and Murphy, meeting the growing demand for distance education and determining policies to examine course delivery and evaluation are challenges facing administrators of higher education (2001). One way of meeting those demands was created and operated by Old Dominion University in the form of their interactive, one-way video, two-way audio distance learning program known as TELETECHNET.

The goals of this research were to:

- Identify the factors that influence student enrollment at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site.
- Identify the population of students enrolling at the TELETECHNET program in regards to age and occupation.
- Project the graduation rate of those students enrolling at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College during the Spring 2002 semester.

- Conclude what is the most popular degree program(s) at the TELETECHNET site.
- Recommend factors for focusing the marketing of Old Dominion University TELETECHNET programs at Southwest Virginia Community College.

In order to adequately cover the topics mentioned, a review of literature was conducted to familiarize the researcher on the topic of distance education, characteristics of the adult learner population, student satisfaction with distance learning programs and marketing of distance education.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

The field of distance education is somewhere between 160 – 200 years old. The earliest recording of an adult education class being advertised was in 1833 in Sweden, to study “composition through the medium of the Post” (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, Zvacek, 2000, p. 22). It has since grown into a multi-million dollar business that not only is utilized by higher education institutions but by businesses as well. In the academic year 1994-95, an estimated 25,730 distance education courses were offered with a total of 753,640 students enrolled (<http://stinet.dtic.mil/special/dlresorc.htm>). The types of technology used to deliver these courses that academic year were two-way interactive video and one-way pre-recorded video with both accounting for a 57% rate of use (<http://stinet.dtic.mil/special/dlresorc.htm>). The Internet with other computer-based technology and two-way audio with one-way video, the method used primarily by Old Dominion University, accounted for 36% and 24% respectively (<http://stinet.dtic.mil/special/dlresorc.htm>).

“In a 2000 report on lifelong learning, the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) noted that 80% of adults believe that furthering their education is important for success at work. Four out of five adults received some type of job-related training or education, while more than half say they will enroll in a college course in the next three years” (Linder, Dooley, & Murphy, 2001, p. 26). “Distance education is now often defined as institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated geographically, and where interactive telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors” (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2000, p. 7). The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Education Research and Improvement defines distance education as “the application of telecommunications and electronic devices which enable students and learners to receive instruction that originates from some distant location” (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2000, p. 20).

“The development of new technologies is opening doors for populations previously unreachable by traditional education. The region of the Appalachia is a population that is being greatly affected by this new technology. Distance learning is one such vehicle for reaching students isolated by distance, geographical barriers, or life circumstances. It is more than a convenience for students in the service region of Appalachia; it is a necessity. Courses that are normally inaccessible to the Appalachia population are now within reach. However, the distance learning experience can be a mixture of both positive and negative experiences” (Whitworth, 1999, p. 64).

“The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1998) conducted a survey on distance education courses offered by higher education institutions and according to

the NCES, in 1998, about 6% of adults in the United States were participating in adult education part-time, seeking a diploma, degree or certificate. Universities offered an estimated 690 degrees and 170 certificates in the fall semester. Further, an estimated 3,430 students received degrees exclusively at a distance. Employed adults and females were more likely to participate in distance education and about 20% took work-related courses provided by universities” (Linder, Dooley, & Murphy, 2001, p. 26). “A greater understanding of why adults choose to study via distance education and what competencies they bring into the program are necessary to ensure quality of the educational experience” (Linder, Dooley, & Murphy, 2001, p. 25).

ADULT LEARNER POPULATION

“The adult education participant is just as often a woman as a man. Is typically under forty, has completed high school or more, enjoys an above-average income, works full-time and most often in a white-collar occupation. Is married and has children, lives in an urbanized area but more likely in a suburb than a large city, and is found in all parts of the country, but more frequently in the West than in other regions” (Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 130). The typical Old Dominion University distance learner is 34 years old, works more than 30 hours per week at a paying job, 63% are women, and the level of satisfaction with courses found no significant difference between men and women (Koch, 1998).

Andragogy is the study of adults. “It is a way of thinking about working with adult learners” and often is thought of as “a set of assumptions and methods pertaining to the process of helping adults learn” (Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 135). “Adults constitute the largest group of distance learners because job and family responsibilities

often inhibit their enrollment in full-time, on campus programs. These responsibilities, coupled with the burden of allocating time for study, can cause adult distance learners to experience setbacks that result in discontinuation of their studies” (Lim, 2001, p. 41).

According to Granger (1990), it is important for distance educators to understand learners within a complex of factors that affect their learning experiences positively or negatively (Lim, 2001). Adults are autonomous and self-directed. They are goal oriented, practical and must see the reason behind learning something new. Adults are motivated by at least six factors when it comes to learning: 1). They are motivated so to build social relationships by meeting new people, creating new associations and friendships, 2). They may have external expectations to fulfill an obligation for a boss or higher authority, 3). To improve upon their social welfare to better serve the community, 4). They are motivated by personal advancement by obtaining a higher degree or acquiring new skills, 5). They even may be motivated to learn just to escape boredom or to have a break in the regular routine, and 6). Adults may also be motivated to learn for learning sake.

“The best way to motivate adult learners is simply to enhance their reasons for enrolling and decrease the barriers. The best motivators for adult learners are interest and selfish benefit. If they can be shown that the course benefits them pragmatically, they will perform better, and the benefits will be longer lasting” (www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/adults-2.htm).

STUDENT SATISFACTION

The distance learner can be of any age, have attained any educational level, and have a variety of educational needs. One common characteristic of the distance learner is an increased commitment to learning (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2000, p.

128). Attitude, prior experience, cognitive abilities and learning style are all indicators or predictors of success in a distance learning environment as reported by Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, and Zvacek.

Based on Dille and Mezack's (1999) study, the profile of a high-risk telecourse student would be, 25 years old, divorced, have less than 30 college credit hours completed, have a GPA less than 3.0-2.9, have higher than average locus of control score, and have lower than average AC-CE score, indicating an abstract learner (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2000, p. 54).

Retention of students in higher education institutions is a major concern for distance education administrators. The at-risk student may be taking more credit hours and working fewer hours per week. They may not have participated in a distance education course before and may be a continuing student who has been away from college for two years or more. They have a less stable study environment, a lower motivational level, they tend to have deficiencies in computer skills and knowledge, and are more likely than not, undergraduate students with low GPA's that may have not received much encouragement in taking the course.

Dropout rates often increase when the learning environment involves the physical separation of the student from the instructor and other students (Osborn, 2001). "In a study of male students, 25 years of age or older, Brown and Robinson found that advising services were more frequently used by students who continued enrollment than by those who eventually dropped out (Curry, Baldwin, & Sharpe, 1998).

A 1998 article revealed that 92% of Old Dominion's distance learning students who register for a course in a fall semester register for more courses the following fall, if

they did not graduate in the interim (Koch, 1999). Billings' (1989) study of nurses enrolled in correspondence courses indicated that the most significant predictor of completion are entrance examination scores, GPA, past completion of other correspondence courses, perceived family support and high goals for completing the program (Osborn, 2001). The results seem to indicate that students at a distance tend to bond more with their fellow classmates and instructor.

To ensure success in a distance education course, proper academic advising must take place, real-time telephone conversations with instructors must occur, and a "personal relationship with an advisor could help prevent students from feeling that they are non-entities and isolated from the institution" (Curry, Baldwin, & Sharpe, 1998). "On-going assessment of distant learner satisfaction can have far-reaching benefits including lower attrition rates, increased student motivation, and enhanced learning" (Whitworth, 1999).

MARKETING DISTANCE EDUCATION

Today, distance education programs are being asked to accommodate an increasingly diverse clientele in a fiercely competitive environment where non-traditional providers are attracting an increasing share of students (Mowen & Parks, 1997, p. 28). Universities are faced with a number of challenges in today's market. Some of them are faced with tuition increases, the declining interest in graduating high school students in continuing their education and the increasing constraints of budgetary problems with the government at the state and federal levels.

Securing and maintaining a competitive advantage is becoming increasingly difficult for traditional institutions as business, industry, and the media respond to these challenges by offering courses that meet the needs of these emerging education markets

(Mowen & Parks, 1997, p. 28). Sixty percent of today's jobs require technology skills and individuals with a lack of these skills may find themselves stagnate in their current employment and becoming part of the ever-increasing digital divide (<http://www.riverdeep.net/current/2002/01/011402+-divide.jhtml>).

How do we go about confronting these challenges? For distance educators, strategic planning involves the clarification of an organizations mission, the identification of its core capabilities, and an examination of the competitive environment in order to identify potentially viable marketing strategies (Mowen & Parks, 1997, p. 28). Mowen and Parks state that shrinking resources mandate that marketing and revenue-producing strategies become an integral part of the distance education planning milieu.

In determining a marketing plan, the following steps should be considered when assessing market attractiveness with an evaluation of competitive ability:

Step one - Define target market segments by identifying whom you are planning to serve.

Step two - Identify the dimensions of quality by recognizing your "distance education product, its supporting services and the program's reputation for quality" (Mowen & Parks, 1997, p. 31).

Step three - Assess the institution's performance on specific quality dimensions by weighing the quality importance and performance.

Step four - Calculate the overall quality position by offering a quality program that helps customer's accomplish some predetermined goal.

Step five - Place quality within an overall competitive position by revealing the institution's status in the marketplace.

Step six - Choose a strategy based on a competitive position and market attractiveness (pp. 31-37).

“A growing body of evidence suggests that the future of distance education will be characterized by increasing competitive intensity. In light of this trend, distance educators will have to adopt strategic marketing orientations to attract and retain the distance education student. Such a market orientation will involve the treatment of the distance education student as a customer and will require a more thorough targeting of substantial and sustainable markets” (Mowen & Parks, 1997, p. 38).

SUMMARY

The four most important reasons for offering distance education courses are:

1). Increase student accesses by making courses available at convenient locations, 2). Increase the institution’s access to new audiences, 3). Increase student access by reducing time constraints for course taking, and 4). Increase institution enrollments (<http://stinet.dtic.mil/special/dlresorc.htm>).

This chapter focused on the topic of distance education, characteristics of the adult learner, student satisfaction with distance learning programs and marketing distance learning. It is evident that the research is plentiful in the area of distance education and adult learning. The traditional and non-traditional way of educating adults is combining to create a better way of delivering instruction via a new mode of education known as distance learning because not everyone can attend a college campus to complete a degree.

The meaning of adult education, characteristics of adult learners, student satisfaction and marketing efforts for distance education are all frameworks in which to build a foundation for this project. In particular, the discovery of the factors that influence

enrollment in distance education programs are of particular importance to this study to determine why Southwest Virginia Community College students are choosing Old Dominion University's TELETECHNET program to complete their baccalaureate degree.

The following chapter, Methods and Procedures will outline the population, instrument design, data collection procedures, and statistical analysis used by the researcher for this project. A summary will complete the chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter III provides an overview of the population, instrument design, data collection procedures and statistical analysis utilized to measure the factors that influence students to enroll into TELETECHNET degree programs located at Southwest Virginia Community College to complete undergraduate degrees.

POPULATION

The sample population for this study was comprised of undergraduate students attending the TELETECHNET site at Southwest Virginia Community College, during the Spring 2002 semester. Students in this study were completing at least three credit hours of instruction. The respondents of this study included students who were degree seeking, non-degree seeking and transient students. Eighty-nine respondents were chosen as participants for this study on the basis of their enrollment in the Spring 2002 semester. This was the entire population enrolled during that period. Each individual was chosen simply by having enrolled in a course during this time period. The respondents were chosen so to provide the study with a wide range of characteristics so to ensure a good quality representation of the population of students enrolling at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

The instrument used to collect data was that of a questionnaire. The survey was developed by the researcher in order to determine the factors that influence the decision

making process of students who choose to attend the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College to complete their undergraduate degree.

There were three sections on the survey for a total of twenty-five questions. The survey instrument consisted of a mixture of open and closed ended questions as well as a section that asked the respondent to rate their answers using the Likert scale. Section one of the instrument explored the demographic information needed for the research study. Section two covered the student status information needed for the study and section three listed some of the reasons why the respondent might choose the TELETECHNET site at Southwest Virginia Community College to complete their degree via Old Dominion University. The questions in section three were based on a five point Likert scale with the most desirable answer receiving a score of 5, and the least receiving a score of 1.

The decision to design the survey using both the open and closed ended questions as well as a Likert scale was so to assist the researcher with more adequate and accurate data collection for the study and to provide ease of answer for the respondent. The survey instrument was one page in length.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The survey instrument was distributed by mailing it to their home address, which was provided by the Old Dominion University site office located on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. The instrument was distributed to each of the eighty-nine participants by mailing the survey along with a cover letter to the respondents' home address. The addresses of each of the eighty-nine students enrolled during the Spring 2002 semester were provided to the researcher so to protect the identity of the respondents.

A cover letter was attached to the front of the survey, informing the respondent of the reason for them receiving the survey and the importance of it to this research study. Each survey was numbered from 1 – 89, so to aid the researcher in keeping tabulations of how many of the surveys were returned. There were no identifying marks on the survey instrument that would reveal the identity of the respondent. A pre-addressed stamped envelope was provided for the respondent to mail the survey back in a timely manner to the researcher (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey). The average time to complete the survey was estimated to take about 10 minutes. After fifty-percent of the surveys was received, the researcher assembled the data that was collected. There was no follow-up letter that was sent due to having achieved the anticipated fifty-percent rate of return of the surveys.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data collected from the surveys will be entered into a statistical software program for ease of data analysis. The data will then be coded for easier manipulation so to identify the average mean score of the fifty-seven surveys that were returned and completed. The Likert scale will be used for data collection in section three to determine the mean score and number of frequencies. The information then will be analyzed to determine the influences that affect the decision-making process of students who choose to attend Old Dominion University's TELETECHNET program located on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College to complete their baccalaureate degree.

SUMMARY

This chapter covered the methods and procedures of conducting the research study. The population of students selected for the study were undergraduates located at the TELETECHNET site on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. They were determined eligible participants by merely being enrolled in a course during the Spring 2002 semester. In the proceeding chapter, Chapter IV, the findings of the research study will be presented.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The problem of this study was to identify the factors of why students are choosing to attend the Old Dominion University TELETECHNET site at Southwest Virginia Community College to complete their undergraduate degree. In order to properly identify the factors, the following research goals were used to guide the study:

1. Identify the factors that influence student enrollment at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site.
2. Identify the population of students enrolling at the TELETECHNET program in regards to age and occupation.
3. Project the graduation rate of those students enrolling at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College during the Spring 2002 semester.
4. Conclude what is the most popular degree program(s) at the TELETECHNET site.
5. Recommend factors for focusing the marketing of Old Dominion University TELETECHNET programs at Southwest Virginia Community College.

This chapter contains the results and the interpretation of the data collected from the survey instrument.

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey instrument consisted of twenty-five questions and was divided into three sections. Fifty-seven out of eighty-nine respondents completed and returned the

survey instrument which accounted for a 64% rate of return. The survey instrument responses were collected and the information was kept anonymous. The responses were then calculated to determine the mean and the percentage of each of the responses.

SECTION ONE

This section of the survey instrument asked questions regarding age, occupation, work status, the number of hours worked and occupational field to assist the researcher in achieving the following objective:

- Identify the population of students enrolling at the TELETECHNET program in regards to age and occupation.

Questions regarding age, work status, number of hours worked and occupation were taken into consideration when collecting the data needed to achieve the above stated objective. The following is a discussion of the findings.

The average (mean) age of all respondents was 33 years. The youngest respondent was 19 while the oldest was 52. (See Table 1.1)

Table 1.1 Mean Age of Respondents

<u>Response Category</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>
All respondents	56	33

The data indicates that 59.6 percent of the respondents' work full-time while attending classes, 4 percent work part-time and 26.3 percent of the respondents are unemployed while attending classes. Of the data collected, the minimum average hours

worked per week was 15 while the maximum hours worked per week was 80 for an average mean of 39.10 hours of work performed each week. (See Table 1.2)

Table 1.2 Work Status

RESPONSE CATEGORY	%
FULL – TIME	59.6
PART – TIME	14.0
UNEMPLOYED	26.3

The data shows that the majority of the jobs held by the students are in the health care field at 27.9 percent, while administrative services accounted for the next highest percent at 25.6. The education field accounted for 16.3 percent followed by mental health services, information systems, engineering and student. (See Table 1.3)

Table 1.3 Occupations of the Respondents

<u>Occupational Field</u>	<u>%</u>
Health Care	27.9
Education	16.3
Mental Health	14.0
Administrative Services	25.6
Engineering	4.7
Information Systems	7.0
Student	4.7

SECTION TWO

This section of the survey instrument asked questions regarding major, student status, graduation plans, and how they heard about the TELETECHNET program to assist the researcher in achieving the following objectives:

- Project the graduation rate of those students enrolling at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College during the Spring 2002 semester.
- Conclude what is the most popular degree program(s) at the TELETECHNET site.
- Recommend factors for focusing the marketing of Old Dominion University TELETECHNET programs at Southwest Virginia Community College.

The data indicates that 50.9 percent of the student body enrolled during the Spring 2002 semester was full-time, and was degree-seeking at 86 percent. There were 47.3 percent part-time students and 5.6 percent were accounted for as non-degree seeking. The “other” category accounted for 3.7 percent. (See Table 2.1)

Table 2.1 Student Status of Respondents

<u>Student Status</u>	<u>% of Respondents</u>
Full-time	50.9
Part-time	47.3
Degree Seeking	86.0
Non-degree Seeking	5.6
Other	3.7

The data presented in Tables 2.2 and 2.3 projects the graduation plans of those respondents enrolled during the Spring 2002 semester as well as lists the most popular

degree program(s) during that term. 91.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they plan to graduate within a two-year time frame, while 5.5 percent of the students do not plan to graduate. The most popular degree program was Human Services Counseling accounting for 29.1 percent, the second most popular degree programs were Elementary Education at 18.2 percent, Nursing at 16.4 percent, and Occupational & Technical Studies at 12.7 percent.

Table 2.2 Graduation Projection

<u>Response Category</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
“Do you plan to graduate?”	57	91.2	5.5

Table 2.3 Degree Programs Available

<u>Response Category</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Accounting	2	3.6
Information Systems	2	3.6
Civil Engineering Technology	1	1.8
Electrical Engineering Technology	1	1.8
Health Sciences	4	7.3
Human Services Counseling	16	29.1
Elementary Education	10	18.2
Professional Communication	3	5.5
Nursing	9	16.4
Occupational & Technical Studies	7	12.7

The data collected from question six of section two was completed by fifty-seven respondents, for a 100 percent rate of response from the total number of collected survey instruments. The data indicate that marketing the Old Dominion University programs via the SVCC schedule is the most popular with a 31.6 percent rate of response. The next most popular method of marketing the TELETECHNET program is by word of mouth,

which accounted for 19.3 percent of how the student body heard of the program during the Spring 2002 semester. Next was the response category “ODU student” and “SVCC advisor” both accounting for 14 percent and 8.8 percent respectively for getting the word out about the TELETECHNET program located on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. (See Table 2.4)

Table 2.4 How You Heard about the TELETECHNET Program?

<u>Response Category</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
SVCC Schedule	18	31.6
Word of Mouth	11	19.3
Newspaper	3	5.3
Bulletin Board	2	3.5
Sign/Flier/Poster	3	5.3
SVCC Advisor	5	8.8
Employer	3	5.3
ODU Student	8	14.0
ODU Employee	4	7.0

SECTION THREE

This section of the survey instrument asked questions of the respondents based on the Likert scale regarding the factors that influenced their decision to attend the TELETECHNET site at Southwest Virginia Community College to assist the researcher in achieving the following objective:

- Identify the factors that influence student enrollment at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site.

This data indicates that the biggest majority of the respondents enrolled during the Spring 2002 semester did so because it was “Close to Home”. The other factors that influenced the respondents’ choice were, “Offered Your Program of Study” that

accounted for a mean of 4.18, “Flexible Class Schedule” accounting for a mean of 3.95, and “Family Obligations” with a mean of 3.76. (See Table 3.1)

Table 3.1 Reasons for Attending the SVCC Site.

<u>Response Category</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Close to Home	57	4.63
Family Obligations	55	3.76
Offered Your Program of Study	56	4.18
No Other 4-year Institutions in the Area	56	3.50
Family Member Attended ODU	56	1.68
Close to Work Location	57	2.82
Low Tuition Cost	55	2.91
Flexible Class Schedule	57	3.95

SUMMARY

Chapter IV provides the results and the significance of the information gathered from the survey instrument. The goals of the research were to:

1. Identify the factors that influence student enrollment at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site.
2. Identify the population of students enrolling at the TELETECHNET program in regards to age and occupation.
3. Project the graduation rate of those students enrolling at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College during the Spring 2002 semester.
4. Conclude what is the most popular degree program(s) at the TELETECHNET site.
5. Recommend factors for focusing the marketing of Old Dominion University TELETECHNET programs at Southwest Virginia Community College.

The researcher distributed surveys to the eighty-nine students enrolled during the Spring 2002 semester by mailing the instrument to their home address, which was provided by the Old Dominion University site office located at Southwest Virginia Community College. Fifty-seven students completed and returned the survey to the researcher for a sixty-four percent rate of return. The survey was then analyzed to determine the mean and percentage of the responses gathered during the data collection process. Chapter V will provide the Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary, conclusions, and recommendations. The summary will contain an overview of the study. The conclusions will be stated by answering the research goals while using the data collected during the study. The recommendations for future efforts will be based upon the results of the study.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors of why students are enrolling in undergraduate degree programs offered by Old Dominion University via their distance learning educational system, TELETECHNET, on the campus of Southwest Virginia Community College. This was completed through the use of the research goals as guidelines in developing the study. The research goals for this study were to:

1. Identify the factors that influence student enrollment at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site.
2. Identify the population of students enrolling at the TELETECHNET program in regards to age and occupation.
3. Project the graduation rate of those students enrolling at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College during the Spring 2002 semester.
4. Conclude what is the most popular degree program(s) at the TELETECHNET site.

5. Recommend factors for focusing the marketing of Old Dominion University TELETECHNET programs at Southwest Virginia Community College.

In order to achieve these goals, a survey instrument was distributed asking the respondents a series of questions pertaining to their age, occupation, work status, and occupational field. They were also asked to inform the researcher of their major, student status, graduation plans, how they heard about the TELETECHNET program and lastly, to rate a list of possible factors that may have affected their decision to attend the TELETECHNET site at Southwest Virginia Community College. A sixty-four percent rate of response was achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

The five goals stated in this study were accomplished through the data collected from the survey instrument. Each of the goals are answered below:

The first goal of this research study was to identify the factors that influence student enrollment at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site. The data indicate that the students' decision to attend this particular location was due to the program being "close to home" with a mean of 4.63, "offering their program of study" with a mean of 4.18 and having a "flexible class schedule" with a mean of 3.95. The data concluded that the TELETECHNET program being "close to home" was the number one factor that influenced the students' decision to attend.

The second goal of this research study was to identify the population of students enrolling at the TELETECHNET program in regards to age and occupation. The data gathered concluded that the average age was 33. The youngest respondent enrolled in the

program was 19 years of age and the oldest respondent was 52. Of those individuals, 59.6 percent work full time and the largest occupational field is in the health care industry.

The third goal of this research study was to project the graduation rate of those students enrolling at the TELETECHNET site located at Southwest Virginia Community College during the Spring 2002 semester. The data concluded that 91.2 percent of the fifty-seven respondents does plan to graduate from a degree program while only 5.5 percent do not plan to graduate.

The fourth goal of this research study was to conclude what is the most popular degree program(s) at the TELETECHNET site. The data concluded that the most popular degree program at the Southwest Virginia Community College site is Human Services Counseling with a 29.1 percent rate of enrollment during the Spring 2002 semester. The second most popular degree program is Elementary Education and third most popular is Nursing.

The fifth and final goal of this research study was to recommend factors for focusing the marketing of Old Dominion University TELETECHNET programs at Southwest Virginia Community College. The data concluded that most of those enrolled during the Spring 2002 semester learned of the TELETECHNET program through the Southwest Virginia Community College schedule and by word of mouth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data collected and the conclusions drawn, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

- Advertise and market the other less popular degree programs by doing site visits in the community, conducting information sessions and open-house informational meetings.
- Utilize more marketing efforts by publishing newspaper features and press releases to get the word out about the TELETECHNET program at Southwest Virginia Community College.
- Develop and maintain a web site for the TELETECHNET site on the Southwest Virginia Community College campus.
- Conduct a study in the region to determine what degree programs, certificates and classes are most needed or desired for economic development.
- Utilize other Southwest Virginia Community College publications to promote the Old Dominion University TELETECHNET program.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A – STUDENT ENROLLMENT SURVEY

APPENDIX B – COVER LETTER

June 27, 2002

Dear ODU Student:

I am conducting a research project to determine the factors that influence Southwest Virginia Community College students to enroll in the Old Dominion University's distance education program TELETECHNET. I am asking for your cooperation and assistance in determining these factors.

Your responses to the items on the enclosed survey will be kept anonymous. There are no identifying marks or procedures involved in this study, so feel free to express your opinions openly and free of biases. This study is important so to better serve the individuals who decide to complete a bachelor's or a master's degree via TELETECHNET. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and consideration in assisting me with this data collection.

Sincerely,

Elaine H. Ward
226 Rockbridge Avenue
Richlands, VA 24641
(276) 963-3444
eward003@odu.edu

Appendix C – Human Subjects Review Committee Approval

Thank you for your revised cover letter. You now have met the requirements for exempt research. You may now proceed with your study.

Stacie Raymer
committee chair

Stacie Raymer, Ph.D.
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----- Forwarded by Anastasia Raymer/ESSE/EDUC/ODU on 07/02/2002 12:52 PM -----

#02-35

To: Elaine Ward & John Ritz

Factors that Influence Student Enrollment, was approved as exempt under category 2, anonymous survey, pending minor revisions. Please change the wording on your cover letter from 'confidential' to 'anonymous.'

Once I receive your revision, I will extend permission to proceed with your research.

Stacie Raymer
chair, College of Education Human Subjects Committee

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Appendix D – Old Dominion University Approval

Elaine....
Approval from Ed. And a suggestion.

Jeanie

Hi Jeanie

Looks fine. Just one thought -- should the item "Family member attended ODU" include "or friend"?

Ed

Ed Smith
Behavioral Technologies

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeanie Kline [mailto:jkline@odu.edu]
Sent: Monday, June 24, 2002 4:57 PM
To: betech@erols.com
Subject: Re: approval to survey TTN students

Greetings, Ed....

Here is another of our staff members who hopes to complete her Master's degree soon. Her letter & survey are attached here.

Thanks for your help.
Jeanie

----- Forwarded by Jeanie Kline/TT/DL/ODU on 06/24/02 04:55 PM -----

May 16, 2002

Dr. John Ritz
Department Chair
Occupational and Technical Studies
Old Dominion University
Hampton Boulevard
Norfolk, VA 23529

Dear Dr. Ritz:

In support of Elaine Ward's research project, she has my permission to use the names and addresses of the students who were enrolled at the Southwest Virginia Community College TELETECHNET site during the spring 2002 semester for her research project. The names and addresses for the students are maintained in a database at the Southwest site. Mailing labels can be provided to Ms. Ward.

Please let me know if additional information is needed. I can be reached by telephone at 276-964-7634 or by e-mail at pneely@odu.edu.

Best regards,

Pat Neely
ODU Site Director
Southwest Virginia Community College