



**PENINSULA
COLLEGE**

Higher Education Opportunities in East Jefferson County



Executive Summary

Report prepared by
Social and Economic Sciences Research Center
Washington State University

2016

SESRC Report 16-053

This page blank for double sided printing.

Introduction

This report summarizes the results from a study of the higher education needs and interests of East Jefferson County with an ultimate goal of providing a proposed program base that could be customized for this area and offered locally in Port Townsend, particularly in the midst of Peninsula College's renovation of Building 202 at Fort Warden. The study consisted of two separate components¹:

- A series of six focus groups with a diverse mix of stakeholders including: two sessions with business leaders and other representatives from businesses; two sessions with civic leaders; one session with a mix of both business and civic leaders; and one session with high school students; and
- A mixed-mode (web and mail) probability survey of East Jefferson County residents.

East Jefferson County is defined as the geographic area on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State including the towns of Brinnon, Chimacum, Port Hadlock, Nordland, Port Ludlow, Port Townsend and Quilcene. The population of interest for the survey included all households in East Jefferson County in the fall of 2015. Overall, the population of East Jefferson County is older, more highly educated and less diverse than that of the state. In 2014, 32% of Jefferson County was 65 years or older and 37% have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Similarly, in Port Townsend, 30% of the adult population is 65 years or older and 45% of those over 25 have a bachelor's degree.

Both the focus groups and the survey provided complementary information regarding Higher Education Needs in East Jefferson County. The focus group sessions covered three main topic areas: Higher education needs in East Jefferson County, impressions of Peninsula College and its role in providing for the higher education needs in the area, and views regarding potential uses for Peninsula College's newly renovated Building 202 on the Fort Worden State Park Campus.

The 6 focus group sessions participants included businessmen and women from marine trades, woodworking, technology, communications, food service, and agriculture; representatives from the public schools and from other educational units or entities in East Jefferson County; local government officials; public health representatives; representatives for various civic organizations including social services, public libraries, veterans, and planning and development; and high school students from 2 area high schools participated in a focus group.

¹ A detailed description of the Focus Group and Survey methodology used to conduct this study and a more detailed discussion of results are presented in three project reports prepared by the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center: SESRC Report 15-070 Higher Education Opportunities in East Jefferson County: Focus Group Summary, SESRC Report 16-012 East Jefferson County Survey Data Report, and SESRC Report 16-024 Higher Education Opportunities in East Jefferson County: Survey Results Summary.

The survey consisted of 28 questions and made it possible to examine gaps between perceived needs and the opportunities for higher education that are available in East Jefferson County. The survey highlighted programs that might be beneficial to the residents in the area, identified potential obstacles that may keep prospective students from taking classes, and examined profiles of potential students. Both the focus groups and the survey also asked about ways to strengthen Peninsula College's identity in East Jefferson County.

A total of 1,600 households located in East Jefferson County were invited to participate in the survey. This study resulted in a 24% response rate with 274 completed and 38 partially completed surveys. Based on a population in East Jefferson County of around 30,000, 247 completed surveys yielded a sample error $\pm 6\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

The survey data were generated from a random sample of households in East Jefferson County and, thus, are generalizable to the overall population of East Jefferson County. Among survey respondents: 50% of respondents were 65 years or older and two thirds have at least a bachelor's degree.

This brief overview of the findings from the focus groups and the survey can guide future efforts of the Peninsula College in enhancing visibility and attractiveness to the East Jefferson County residents given a unique demographic profile of the area. While Peninsula College programs and offerings in Port Townsend are ongoing, the results from this study can be used for the strategic planning that is taking place as Peninsula College renovates and moves into the Fort Worden Building 202 in 2016. (More detailed results are presented in the three SESRC Reports footnoted earlier).

Principal Findings

PERCEIVED HIGHER EDUCATION NEEDS IN EAST JEFFERSON COUNTY

- There is a general view among business and civic leaders and representatives that higher education needs are not being met in East Jefferson County or that more could be done to boost the existing higher education and vocational or trade programs that are currently being offered in the area.
- Based on the survey results, a majority of residents (88%) think that higher education needs of East Jefferson County are either *not being met* or are *only partially being met*. Despite a number of colleges providing access to higher education available in Jefferson County (e.g., Peninsula College, WSU Jefferson County Extension, Old Dominion and Goddard College), there is a gap between the perceived needs and opportunities for higher education that are available in East Jefferson County.
- Business and civic representatives noted that one of the major downsides in East Jefferson County is that many of the certification and degree programs that are of interest in this area are not offered locally. Furthermore, while there are classes and programs offered in East Jefferson County, most often students have to travel or commute out of the area in order to complete a certification or degree, or students have to rely on online courses to fulfill course requirements, which are seen as a less desirable format. Residents who would otherwise stay in East Jefferson County have to go outside the area to seek the higher education opportunities they desire or need for career advancement, which means they may never come back.
- *What are residents' higher education needs?* A majority of residents said that higher education opportunities should be conveniently located in East Jefferson County, easily accessible to people, and should not require people to travel elsewhere in order to finish the degree or program. Many indicated there is a need for more basic education and entry level classes and some have an interest in getting an associate's degree. Other residents would like more access to four-year degree programs, or access to four-year-degree-granting institutions.
- Although a number of programs (e.g., woodworking, boat building, and maritime and marine trades) draw students to the area, they cannot stay after they finish these program because jobs are limited and there are no higher education connections to these programs that allow these students to continue and advance their education and careers in these program areas.
- *What segments of the population in East Jefferson County are in most need of higher education?* Focus group and survey results suggest several categories of individuals would benefit from additional higher education opportunities: First, high school graduates who are not quite ready for college, as well as those high school graduates who want to start college locally, with plans to continue elsewhere; second, working people and young families who are trying to better their skills or are looking for continuing education or career advancement; and third, older adults looking for enrichment opportunities.

Principal Findings

- Business and civic leaders noted several demographic challenges for higher education in East Jefferson County. First, there is a shortage of young people in East Jefferson County and specifically, many high school students want to leave the area once they graduate. And second, the workforce is aging out in the vocational trades and skilled labor fields that are in demand in East Jefferson County. Therefore, there is an increasing shortage of qualified people to fill those positions. There needs to be a better understanding of how to encourage young people to stay in the area or how to draw young people back after they have gone away after graduating. More also needs to be done to attract others to the area who have the skills that are needed or else vocational or trade programs need to be developed that will draw people to the area.

VISIBILITY AND REPUTATION OF PENINSULA COLLEGE

- Among business and civic leaders and representatives, the overall perception of Peninsula College in the East Jefferson County area is positive, though many indicated they are not sure what is currently being offered through Peninsula College in Port Townsend. Clearly, there is excitement about the possibility for a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Peninsula College as represented in this new facility on the Fort Worden State Park campus. Peninsula College is viewed as the college with the most potential for having a greater, more visible presence in East Jefferson County and for serving the higher education needs in East Jefferson County. Peninsula College is also the institution that has the greatest potential to facilitate increased cooperation and partnerships in the area.
- Overall, Peninsula College has a high level of recognition in the general public, whereas the degree to which Peninsula College is actually visible varies considerably. When asked for opinions regarding overall Peninsula College's image, reputation, and connections with high schools, the percent of respondents who did not have an opinion ranged from 27% to as high as 65%, depending on the statement. Statements related to specific aspects of Peninsula College such as *connections with high schools* received the highest numbers of "Don't know" responses, while statements related to a general image, reputation, or/and communication of Peninsula College with the local community received significantly lower number of "Don't know" responses.
- Among those with an opinion, the survey revealed an overall positive disposition toward the Peninsula College's reputation. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority has a favorable perception of Peninsula College connections with high schools in East Jefferson County, and has a favorable view of Peninsula College is a resource for college bound high school students.
- Despite being ranked as having a good reputation and overall positive image in the community, Peninsula College is less successful in being perceived as providing for the higher education needs of East Jefferson County, and offering an appropriate variety of educational degrees and coursework.

Principal Findings

STRENGTHENING PENINSULA COLLEGE'S PRESENCE AND IDENTITY

- Business and civic leaders and representatives want to feel that Peninsula College is visible, strong, active, accessible, and present. They want to know that Peninsula College is committed to the long term well-being of East Jefferson County.
- In response to how Peninsula College Port Townsend might strengthen its presence in East Jefferson County, the survey respondents cited a wide range of suggestions: 1) Peninsula College needs to do more to publicize and get the word out as to what is going on at Peninsula College in Port Townsend by doing more marketing and better advertising and by becoming more visible; 2) Peninsula College needs to increase and build connections in the local communities by strengthening relationships with area businesses, community leaders, local organizations, and area high schools; and 3) Peninsula College could strengthen its identity through specific types of programs or events offered in East Jefferson County (e.g., more and expanded class offerings, emphasis on vocational opportunities, offer programs that build on local strengths).
- Business and civic leaders and representatives expressed the desire for Peninsula College to have a more visible and clearer presence in the communities in East Jefferson County. They would like Peninsula College to have a local presence, or be the “face” for higher education. They would like to have a Peninsula College representative at their various committee meetings and community events; they would like to see a greater presence by Peninsula College in their already established community leadership. Ideally, there would be a representative who is based in East Jefferson County.
- Across all focus groups, a prominent recommendation for strengthening Peninsula College's presence was to improve connections with area high schools and take a more active role in helping high school students see the bigger picture beyond high school. In particular, Peninsula College should be partnering with the high schools and be on the high school campuses explaining what Peninsula College's has for the students as well as to help students make that leap to the broader world. Peninsula College could be more actively involved in advising college bound high school students, including those who have an interest in getting an associate's degree; as well as actively recruit those students who do not plan to leave the area after they graduate. Furthermore, it is more important for Peninsula College to come to the high schools to make these contacts rather than the other way around. By developing a greater rapport with the high schools, Peninsula College would strengthen its identity as a leader in higher education in East Jefferson County and would increase its visibility overall.
- Also, the new facility will provide a location for Peninsula College to host events and be open to the public. New signage is also needed and branding that will separate Peninsula College in Port Townsend from Peninsula College in Port Angeles. Furthermore, Peninsula College in Port Townsend needs to be seen as the local college for all of East Jefferson County, not just Port Townsend.

Principal Findings

- Business and civic leaders and representatives indicated that merely aiming to maintain its status quo in Port Townsend will not be enough. East Jefferson County is a unique area with complex higher education needs and for that reason it is challenging for Peninsula College to know how best to meet those needs. The current higher education needs in East Jefferson County are not being adequately addressed by Peninsula College.

POTENTIAL FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

- Business and civic leaders and representatives described East Jefferson County as an area with fractured capabilities where more integration is needed. Partnerships and collaborations among various programs and entities would provide an economy of scale. Sharing resources would be mutually beneficial by boosting enrollment in the various programs and would generate greater visibility for Peninsula College overall. Business and civic leaders and representatives see Peninsula College as having the potential for becoming the umbrella under which these programs could operate. They see Peninsula College has having the most potential for helping to establish and further develop ways to work together. In doing so, everyone would benefit, including Peninsula College
- Business and civic leaders and representatives would like to see a more cooperative approach or partnerships between Peninsula College and other postsecondary and certificate programs or “schools” available in the East Jefferson County area, including online and distance programs through colleges and university outside the area. Many of these programs or schools aren’t accredited, but those who finish the programs would benefit if there were options for using what they learned and continue to pursue other higher education opportunities.
- Business and civic leaders and representatives also see a rich potential for internship and apprenticeship opportunities for high school age workers as well as other adults in Port Townsend and the surrounding areas. Peninsula College is seen as the entity that could foster these relationships or facilitate connections with area businesses and organizations for internships and apprenticeships. Many high school students do not get a broad-based background that includes vocational training or exposure to trade school options. Peninsula College could help to bridge that gap and provide more vocational counseling in the high schools
- Business and civic leaders and representatives encourage Peninsula College to “think outside the box” by expanding its current offerings to create a specialized program that would build on current strengths in East Jefferson County, such as marine biology or the marine trades, as well as other possible areas in the arts and culture, or high growth technology. East Jefferson County could become known for such a specialized program, or become a magnet program that would attract students to come from all over to attend that program. Those who come from outside of East Jefferson County would stay at least for the duration of their studies, and while some might choose to stay, the majority would move on once they have completed the program.

Principal Findings

FAMILIARITY WITH THE SERVICES

- It is important to estimate the percentage of residents who demonstrate specific knowledge about current services provided by Peninsula College Port Townsend. The degree to which residents are familiar with Peninsula College's services and offerings varies considerably. Overall, residents were more likely to be familiar with classes for students participating in the Running Star program, which is one of the main mission centric services offered by Peninsula College. On the other hand, residents were less likely to know about more nuanced services targeted to potential enrollees or/and students such as financial aid guidance, support for students pursuing online degree options, college placement testing, and educational career planning/advising.
- Residents with less education² have substantially lower levels of familiarity with every aspect of Peninsula College's services and offerings available in the community.
- The more residents utilize Peninsula College, the more familiar they become with what Peninsula College has to offer. In general, familiarity with Peninsula College's services and offerings was significantly higher among residents who have some interest in taking classes or were already taking courses at Peninsula College Port Townsend.

INTEREST IN ENROLLMENT

- Of those who were not enrolled in any college-level classes at the time of the survey, majority (65%) had some interest in taking college-level classes in the future. This percent was made up of 20% affirmatively interested in taking college-level classes and 45% "maybe" interested in taking college-level classes in the future. The level of definitive interest in taking college-level classes slightly varied by population segment. In particular, residents with less education were more likely to be affirmatively interested than their higher-educated counterparts in taking college-level classes (24% vs 18.8%).
- Analyzing the educational intentions of those survey respondents who were enrolled and those who were "not already enrolled, but are/might be interested," we found that a fifth, or 21%, were interested in either 2-year degree programs or workforce/job training programs. Another 8% indicated their interest was in a 4-year degree, while a larger proportion, 18% percent, indicated they were interested in graduate or professional degree classes. Interestingly, the majority, or 54%, indicated they would be interested in some "other" type of college level classes.
- Relative to general population, less educated residents had significantly higher levels of interest in either 2-year degree programs or workforce/job training programs, and a 4-year degree (26%). At the same time their interest in "other" type of college level classes was significantly lower than that of for overall residents.

² Residents with a 2-year degree or Associate degree or lower.

Principal Findings

- When asked to specify what “other types” of college level classes, the majority provided comments related to the “enrichment “(44%), which contains comments that refer to personal enrichment, taking classes for fun, or taking classes, continuing education, and not for credit. Several residents were interested in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) classes (15%) and college level or postgraduate level continuing education (13%).
- For residents with at least some interest in taking college-level classes in the future, the location of the post-secondary education program is important. Indeed, a majority (69%) indicated they would consider pursuing a post-secondary education at Peninsula College in Port Townsend. The importance of on-site access to associate’s degrees or certificate programs, if offered through Peninsula College, was also stressed out by business and civic leaders during focus groups interviews.
- Other suggested locations were significantly less likely to be chosen as a place for pursuing the same post-secondary education program. Ten percent each indicated they would choose Peninsula College in Port Angeles, Olympic College in Bremerton, or some other location. Only 1% indicated Edmonds Community College. The other options mentioned were: online (7), Poulsbo (7), University of Washington (6), Seattle colleges (2), Sequim (2), Port Hadlock (2), Evergreen (1), Skagit (1), Out of state (1), Other arrangement (2).

INTEREST IN CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

- According to the survey data, the major program areas of interest include non-profit organizations and artisan; organic food program; entrepreneurship; agriculture; volunteer management; and marine science. Residents were least likely to be interested in welding, hospitality and tourism, marine trades or mechanics, automotive, nursing or in-home workers’ certificates.
- The interest in programs slightly varied by population segment. For residents with less education, certification programs in non-profit organizations, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and artisan or organic food were ranked at the top four.
- Fifty-nine survey respondents provided comments about “other” certificate programs of interest to them. The overall impression from comments provided was that residents are looking for classes that are related to the arts, nutrition, exercise and health, languages, and computer or technology skills.
- According to the focus groups, East Jefferson County has an ongoing need for associates degrees or certification programs in the technical fields, the trades (e.g. carpentry, welding) and the maritime industry. Business and civic leaders identified several other areas that are in high need in East Jefferson County. These include: entrepreneurship and how to start a business, hospitality and tourism, agriculture and culinary arts, healthcare fields, nonprofit and volunteer management, and teacher trainings and certifications.

Principal Findings

- There is also a need for enrichment and lifelong learning. While there is interest in offering lifelong learning or enrichment classes, most felt that the priority for the programs offered by Peninsula College Port Townsend should be for young people or those who are actively working or in careers.

OBSTACLES FOR ENROLLMENT

- The key purpose of surveying residents, especially potential enrollees, is to understand the factors that might inhibit their ability to take college classes in East Jefferson County.
- For all survey respondents interested in college level classes, the main obstacles were the limited number of classes and times in which they are offered; the lack of choice in the kinds of training or education offered; time constraints; and cost of taking classes. For low-income residents interested in college level classes, lack of choice in the kinds of training or education offered; limited number of classes; and cost of taking classes were the most frequently mentioned obstacles.
- Twenty-three percent (23%) indicated some “other” obstacle, including lack of choice in the classes you can take, health concerns, lack of time or confidence, or something else.
- To reach more residents interested in education, colleges nation-wide are offering alternative methods and times of course and program delivery. The survey explored what degree formats and times would work the best for the area residents. For all potential enrollees, regardless of their educational interest, in-person classes and a mixture of online, video and in-person methods of delivering college-level classes were the equally preferable options. A small proportion, 5%, opted for online classes. Less educated potential enrollees were significantly more likely than their more educated counterparts to prefer a mixture of online, video and in-person methods of delivering college-level classes (63.4%) and less likely to prefer online classes (29%).
- Overall, 35% of the sample, regardless of their educational interest, would prefer to take classes afternoon (1p.m.-5 p.m.), while 31% would prefer to take classes in the evening (5p.m-10p.m.). One-fourth would prefer to take classes in the morning (8a.m-12 p.m.).

COMMUNICATIONS

- The survey results suggest that in order to maintain visibility within the communities, and keep residents aware of its services and programs, Peninsula College should continue using direct mailings, as indicated by with 90% of residents. The other most popular methods to communicate information were newspaper (77%), Internet website (72%), and email (70%). Less popular ways, with less than half indicating it as a way to inform were visiting Fort Worden (46%), radio (39%), or social media (33%).

Principal Findings

- Finally, Peninsula College relies on “word of mouth” marketing tool which is one of the most trusted forms of advertising. In fact, 61% of survey respondents cited this method as one of the best ways to inform them about education related opportunities. Establishing lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with members of the community can ensure that the Peninsula College can achieve its goals of promoting services and educating the public.

NEWLY RENOVATED BUILDING AT FORT WORDEN STATE PARK

- Business and civic leaders and representatives are excited about the prospect of the new Peninsula College facility on the Fort Worden Campus, Building 202. They see the new facility as a catalyst to greater opportunities for higher education in East Jefferson County. Fort Worden facility should be a resource available to the community and local area.
- A majority (68%) of residents were at least somewhat familiar with Peninsula College’s renovation of Building 202 at the Fort Worden State Park.
- When asked about their thoughts about Peninsula College Port Townsend’s newly renovated Building, clearly there is excitement about the newly renovated facility as indicated by the majority of those who offered comments. A few others expressed concerns regarding access and costs. A few admitted they were not very familiar the facility or the state part area.
- Along with the excitement about the new facility, business and civic representatives also have concerns. While the new facility represents new possibilities, leaders and representatives recognize that there will be space limitations depending on what is planned for it. Perhaps the greater concern is that Peninsula College will mainly do just more of the same, or will maintain the status quo and that will not begin to meet the higher education needs in East Jefferson County. Some expressed concern that while there is definitely a demand for lifelong learning, that should not become a dominant program in the new facility. The priority needs to be for younger segments of the population where there is real need.
- Business and civic leaders and representatives would like to see the new facility become a meeting place for college students, a place where they feel a sense of identity with Peninsula College. It will also make Peninsula College more visible and will become a more effective front for the college. Furthermore, they would like all of east Jefferson County to feel a sense of identity and ownership with the new facility and with Peninsula College as their college in East Jefferson County. In that sense, it could become more than just another meeting place.

Principal Findings

- Business and civic leaders and representatives have strong interest in having a state-of-the-art computer, technology and/or media arts lab in the new facility. It would be used for classes, but it would also be available to multiple groups or local entities and maybe even open to the general public. The vision for the lab includes various software, 3D printers, electronics, or tools that could be used to create technical products. There is also interest in having a state-of-the-art communications center, also available to local groups or entities. Additionally, there is interest in having a Makerspace--spaces where people can create, invent, and learn.
- Business and civic leaders and representatives would also like Peninsula College to be more involved in planning community events related to the college at the new Fort Worden facility.
- Across the various activities that could be offered at Peninsula College at the Fort Worden State Park, between 5% and 11% indicated they “don’t know” if they would attend.
- Of those who have an opinion, more than three quarters of residents indicated they were *unlikely* to *very unlikely* to attend all but two types of classes/programs/activities that could be offered.
- The two types of classes/program/activities that produced the most interest was noncredit life-long learning or enrichment programs and the noncredit job training.
- When asked for community input on types of programs to offer at Peninsula College on the Fort Worden campus, lectures and films were two types of programs that were most often mentioned. Other program formats that were mentioned included classes/courses, workshops, and seminars; as well as special events such as concerts, exhibits, and symposiums.
- A number of different content areas for various types of programs were mentioned. History and science were two content area most often listed. Other content areas mentioned five or more times each included: the environment, cultures, languages, the arts or art, health topics/issues, computers and computer programming, travel, nature, writing, and technology.
- There also seemed to be a particular interest in featuring local interest topics or topics about the local area. Also, a number of craft and enrichment topics were also mentioned.

Conclusions

- There is excitement in East Jefferson County about Peninsula College with the renovation of Building 202 on the Fort Worden State Park campus. Business and civic leaders and representatives, and the general public have a good impression of Peninsula College Port Townsend, even though it is not always understood what the college offers in the local area, or whether the programs that are offered, are enough to meet the needs.
- The demographic profile for the East Jefferson County area, where the majority of residents are of retirement age or older, means there is a shortage of young people to fill certain types of jobs that are available. In addition to the shortage of people to fill certain types of jobs, there is also a shortage of living wage jobs and opportunities for advancing one's education or career in the local area. Some of those who would otherwise stay in the East Jefferson County have to leave the area in order to advance their education or careers. Because East Jefferson County is somewhat geographically isolated relative to the larger geographic area, accessing higher education opportunities outside the local area is a greater challenge for those who don't want to relocate.
- Both business and civic leaders and representatives, and the general public expressed concerns that the higher education needs in East Jefferson County are not being met. Yet, there is a real desire for greater higher education opportunities, especially for those who are looking for vocational training or to advance their careers by completing associates' degrees or certificate programs and/or four-year degree programs. In addition, there is a need for Peninsula College to more actively reach out to high school students and be a resource for them regarding college opportunities.
- Peninsula College is viewed as the college with the most potential for serving the higher education needs in the East Jefferson County area. There is an overall good impression of Peninsula College Port Townsend. However, more needs to be done to get the word out about Peninsula College Port Townsend. East Jefferson County wants to see a greater presence in their area and to feel that Peninsula College has an identity in East Jefferson County. Peninsula College Port Townsend needs to have a "face" for the college in the local communities and at local events. That means having someone who represents the college and is a part of the local area. Overall, business and civic leaders and representatives want Peninsula College Port Townsend to become a place where people "go to college", not just take classes.
- People in East Jefferson County area excited about the newly renovated Building 202 on the Fort Worden State Park campus and hope it can become a place where higher education opportunities can be developed and where East Jefferson County will feel a sense of identity.