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Pilot Study on a Non-Credit Adult Education Program in Chatham County

EVANEL R. TERRELL

Programs in adult education have been current in Chatham County since 1910 when the first informal night school was organized. In 1928 the first formal adult day classes were organized by the Savannah Vocational School.

Three factors played a pre-eminent role in the initiation of a non-credit home economics adult education course at Savannah State College. Interest in the many phases of home economics had been expressed by women living in the surrounding community who were either working or had worked at the college at some time. Their hope was to be able to learn some of the skills for better living. During this period Hammond Hall, the home economics building, was completely renovated and redecorated making the facilities both attractive and functional for varied type programs. A drop in the Division enrollment during an interim period of reorganization invited the third reason for opening our doors to citizens in the community who had a desire to start or continue their education in certain specific fields. The home economics staff felt that this venture would be an opportunity for the broadest possible type of professional interpretation and promotion and further, the Division of Home Economics would be meeting the challenge of higher education by fostering free education for all in a democratic society.

Higher education will not play its special role in American Democracy and in international affairs successfully unless it assumes the responsibility for a program of adult education reaching far beyond the campus and classroom.¹

Because of the general reticence of the adult community to use the College facilities, the plan of direct contact was thought advisable to acquaint everyone with the program. Additionally opportunity would be afforded not only to sell the college but cement beginning college friendships. Visits were made to all community churches, local industries and businesses such as shrimp factories, and laundries and followed up by personal contact in the homes of key community leaders.

To find out the diversified interests, the following questionnaire was prepared and personally given to each woman for checking.

¹President's Commission on Higher Education, Higher Education for American Democracy, Vol. 1, "Establishing Goals," Washington, D. C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1947, p. 100.

INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

INFORMATION, PLEASE!

WE NEED YOUR ADVICE. The Division of Home Economics at Savannah State College has decided that one of the important new services it can offer to its members, and others, is a streamlined program of informal adult education. We want to offer those subjects which you — and people like you — will want to take. Will you let us know your desires, by checking the blanks below. (Check the column that most nearly reflects the way you feel.) Then, will you place this sheet in the postage-paid envelope enclosed and mail it right back to us? Thanks.

HOME and FAMILY IMPROVEMENT	<i>Good Idea</i>	<i>Am Interested</i>	<i>Would Enroll</i>
1. Food Preparation	_____	_____	_____
2. Art in the Home	_____	_____	_____
3. Dressmaking and Tailoring	_____	_____	_____
4. Furniture Repair	_____	_____	_____

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

5. Public Speaking	_____	_____	_____
6. Sex and Marriage	_____	_____	_____
7. Psychology and Personality	_____	_____	_____
8. Getting along with Others	_____	_____	_____
9. The Science of Health	_____	_____	_____
10. Other:	_____	_____	_____

HOBBIES and LEISURE-TIME LIVING

11. Photography for Amateurs	_____	_____	_____
12. Home Movies	_____	_____	_____
13. Stamp and Coin Collecting	_____	_____	_____
14. Getting More Out of Music	_____	_____	_____
15. Enjoyment of Literature	_____	_____	_____
16. Painting as a Hobby	_____	_____	_____
17. Other:	_____	_____	_____

Most convenient time for you: 5-7 _____; 7-9 _____;

Name _____ Address _____

A period of two weeks was allowed before collections were made. Interest groups fell into 5 classes-Bible study,* reading,* food preparation, dress making and tailoring and art in the home.

*Not listed on questionnaire but personally mentioned by prospective students.

The literature was checked with reference to length of time for classes and period of attendance. To begin it was felt that classes should run 4 hours per week for a period of eight weeks. Provisions were made to accommodate all persons desiring to attend classes. Four nights per week were set aside-class groups attending from 7-9 p.m. on alternate nights, Tuesday and Thursday or Monday and Wednesdays.

A class of 78 assembled September 1954 for the first class. Bible study and reading were dropped for lack of sufficient numbers.

A report of the Savannah State College adult education program was included in the Purdue University National survey of non-credit adult education programs at the university level.² Criteria for participation included

- (1) Total college enrollment 1000 or over
- (2) A non-credit adult education program reaching beyond the classroom into the community

The regular college home economics teaching staff assumed extra night school teaching responsibility with no additional salary. Increased cost of operation was underwritten by the home economics budget.

Overall objectives were made to cover goals

- (1) Prepare students for vocational advancement
- (2) Help develop new interests for self improvement
- (3) Help students find diversion in semi-educational recreation
- (4) Help students to learn basic skills and techniques in their areas of interest
- (5) Provide satisfying experiences through graded projects

To offer maximum encouragement to all adult participants, graded proficiency certificates were set up for a 1, 2, 3, or 4 year attendance. These tangible indications of achievement were to be given at the close of the year. Such a plan allowed students a definite period of achievement if termination had to occur before they reached their point of personal accomplishment.

A general questionnaire was issued to each adult at the end of the two year period to evaluate the success of the informal methods and variety of educational practices. We were anxious to see whether or not the program had lived up to one of the deepest roots of American education — that of stressing the relationship of living and learning.

²Studies in Higher Education, *Non-Credit Adult Education at the University Level* — Purdue Division of Education. Reference (Lafayette, Indiana). April 1958, no. LXXXVIII.

DIVISION OF HOME ECONOMICS
SAVANNAH STATE COLLEGE
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Adult Education Comment Sheet
Spring Quarter, 1956

The Division of Home Economics has enjoyed having you as a student for the past two years. We would like to have some of your personal comments about what you have been doing and what you would like to do.

- I. What did you want to learn when you started in the night school classes?
- II. What have you learned since you have been attending classes?
- III. What are some other skills you would like to learn?
- IV. How do you think we can reach more women in our community?

A tabulation of questionnaire answers showed that each adult re-expressed her definite interest goals, level of achievement and requested further opportunity to either continue with the present class or reach new experience satisfactions in a second class.

An analysis of the enrollment of adults over the past 4 years shows the following figures

TABLE I
Enrollment in Adult Education at Savannah State College

<i>Years</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Spring</i>
1954-1955	78	63	72
1955-1956	87	75	72
1956-1957	88	73	80
1957-1958	72	68	42

The general pattern shows that there is general stabilization with enrollment greatest in the fall. However, the substantial drop in enrollment during the present school year is consistent with the over-all college enrollment figures. Investigation revealed that enrollment drops during the winter months when pooled transportation is intermittent. Bus transportation to Savannah State College is infrequent after 8 p.m. Most of the adults belong to the 80% of Negro women who must work away from home to support their families and, therefore, they feel obligated to be at home no later than 9:30 p.m. A number of adults had to drop out because of family illness and death.

The 182 students enrolled in the informal program at Savannah State College during the 1957-1958 school year were not a part of the 5,195 students enrolled in the formal adult education program sponsored for Negro and white students by the Savannah Vocational School. A hundred and twenty-eight hours, the equivalent of con-

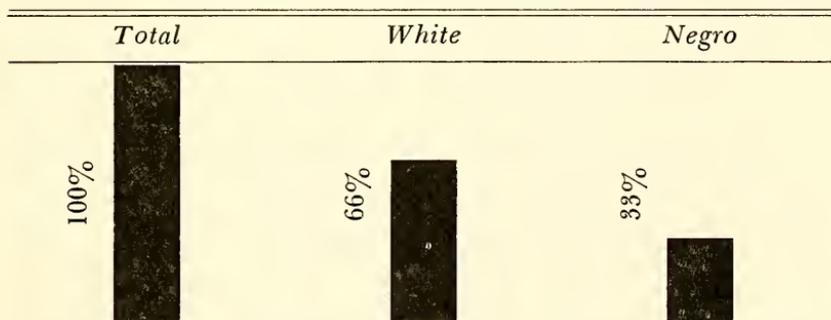
tinuous attendance for one year (4 hours per week, 8 weeks per quarter), is the minimum requirement for a graded proficiency certificate for the College informal program. The number of hours required for the formal vocational program certificate is approximately 500 hours over a 3-year attendance.

The distribution of students among the 5,195 enrollment figures showed that there were 3,438 white students and 1,757 Negro students. Classes were offered in vocational agriculture, vocational office training, evening trade extension, distributive education, homemaking, practical nursing, fire school, and an area trade school.³

Of particular interest to us was the total number of women enrolled in the two home-making programs which are developed with more or less emphasis on vocational needs and personal and community improvement problems. For the year 1957-1958, the number of Negro women attending the Savannah Vocational classes was 175, the Savannah State College program, 182. For the nominal registration fee which is charged for either course it is felt that more women might take advantage of these opportunities.

A comparative enrollment graph would appear as follows:

TABLE II
*Comparative Enrollment**



*Enrollment: Total 5,195; White 3,438; Negro 1,757

The college program has appealed to and has been sustained by adults representing varied professions and a wide difference in academic training. Accordingly, the educational background of the enrollees fell into the following categories:

1. No formal education
2. Elementary education only
3. High school education
4. College education

³*Annual Report, Savannah Vocational School, 1957-1958.*

It was interesting to learn that 12 vocational pursuits were noted among the many enrollees. These included the following: self-employed, housemaids, housewives, practical nurses, beauticians, caterers, high school teachers, college teachers, institutional cleaners, medical clinicians, snack bar operators and factory workers.

Even though class registrations were mixed indiscriminately in regard to age, educational background and preparation, we found that achievement levels were on par with interest and personal drive. According to age levels served, the highest participation was among those from the 30-45 year-age group. This age distribution supports similar findings in the Holden⁴ study.

The Division of Economics believes that the informal adult program has fitted into and reached a felt need in the community. Genuine interest for the increased status felt in the general community has been successfully represented in the improvement of the quality of the termination adult education assemblies developed by the students and the number of persons who attend this culminating exercise. Representation in attendance includes a respectable cross-section of the entire College Community — teachers, students and laymen.

A record of the class personnel has enabled us to get a picture of whom we serve and their interests, thereby affording a clearer basis for redefining goals and developing more dramatically the adult education program.

It is further believed that the time is ripe to further investigate sources of adult education program support and subsidy from grants, scholarships or endowments. This would enable the College to divide the teaching responsibility of keeping the program of offerings enriched and geared to the needs of the community and providing a means for keeping a running pulse check on needs for expanding adult educational opportunities.

⁴John B. Holden, A Survey of Participation in Adult Education Classes, *Adult Leadership*. Vol. 6, No. 10, April 1958, p. 259.