

Executive Summary

2011 NEPACU Survey of College Students in Lackawanna County

In February and March of 2011 the eight colleges and universities in Lackawanna County surveyed students regarding their perceptions and patronage of downtown Scranton venues for dining, shopping, cultural events and entertainment. This information is being provided to the business community in the hope of stimulating conversation on ways the downtown merchants can increase business with this market segment and ways the colleges and universities can encourage students to participate in events downtown.

In addition to their purchasing behavior in downtown Scranton, students were asked about their total off campus spending in the above mentioned categories, as well as the amount spent for rent, utilities and groceries. **Based on the survey, the 14,026 students of the eight colleges in Lackawanna County report spending an average total of more than \$3.6 million monthly in the local economy.**

In general, student spending patterns, awareness and comments remain consistent with surveys from previous years. The 2011 survey illustrates that a substantial market exists as does a strong potential for development. Not only do many students remain unaware of a number of downtown venues, many of the types of businesses and events the students say that they would like to see downtown already exist.

Students have indicated that they attend several downtown event, including some that have targeted this population. The survey data indicates that in several instances students have become increasingly aware of downtown businesses and events during their four years attending an area college for undergraduate and then for graduate studies, including First Fridays, which is one of the programs targeted by downtown merchants as a “college market” event following the 2009 student survey.

Baptist Bible College & Seminary
Johnson College
Keystone College
Lackawanna College
Marywood University
Penn State Worthington Scranton
The Commonwealth Medical College
The University of Scranton

Community Partners:
The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce
Scranton Tomorrow

Sizable Market Exists

To estimate the overall off campus spending by students, the following chart applies for the average spending amount in each category while schools are in session.

Spending	Sum All Categories*	Restaurants / Dining	Entertainment / Cultural	Retail Stores
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
\$1 to \$20	\$10,360	\$3,020	\$4,690	\$2,650
\$21 to \$50	\$38,325	\$13,895	\$11,270	\$13,160
\$51 to \$100	\$41,250	\$16,500	\$8,700	\$16,050
Over \$100	\$26,600	\$9,700	\$4,500	\$12,400
	\$116,535	Total spending per month for 1,025 students surveyed		
	\$114	Average spending per student per month (dining, shopping, entertainment)		
	\$1,594,654	Total spending per month - all Lackawanna county college students **		
	\$2,054,455	Total spending per month – rent, utilities, groceries - all students ***		
	\$3,649,108	Total monthly off campus spending (equals \$260 per student per month)		

* Used mid-point for all ranges except "Over \$100" where we used \$100

** 11,636 undergraduate and 2,410 graduate = total of 14,026

*** Approximately \$685 per off campus student per month x 3,001 students (21.4% of population)

Potential for Development

The results of the survey have been similar over the years, reflecting not only what students spend off campus, but also where they shop, what they like, and their awareness of downtown venues. It should be noted, however, that because of changes made in the 2011 survey to include graduate and medical students of all the colleges and universities, including TCMC, and the inclusion of student spending for groceries, rent and utilities, direct comparisons to the 2009 and previous surveys on some data points cannot always be made.

The 2011 survey results show that students continue to patronize downtown venues for shopping, dining and entertainment, along with other off campus venues. More than 80% report dining at downtown venues or The Mall at Steamtown; 85% report shopping downtown or at The Mall at Steamtown; and 89% report attending entertainment and cultural events downtown.

Overall however, students remain largely unaware of a number of specific businesses downtown. On average, 78% of student surveyed were not familiar with the apparel retailers listed downtown; 72% were not familiar with the salons; 68% were not familiar with the gift and specialty shops; 52% were not familiar with downtown restaurants; 52 % were unfamiliar with venues and events in downtown Scranton.

Those surveyed were also asked about the businesses that they would like to see downtown. The most common comments made by those that responded include: chain restaurants (40% with Panera Bread, Applebee's, Olive Garden, TGI Fridays, Johnny Rockets, Chipotle and Chili's requested most often); ethnic restaurants (35%, with Mexican and Italian requested most often); bookstores (40%); and major retailers (34% with Walmart, Target, Macy's and JC Penny's named most often) The types of cultural and entertainment events that most interested the students were musical concerts and bands (46%).

Events Bring Students Downtown/Increase Awareness

For the 2011 survey, students were asked about attendance at major downtown events such as the St. Patrick's Day Parade (55% of undergraduates; 61% of graduate students have attended), La Festa Italiana (57% of undergraduates; 57% of graduate students have attended); and First Fridays (25% of undergraduates; 36% of graduate students have attended). The survey results also indicated that patronage at several of these events as well as patronage at a popular downtown coffee shop increased from freshman through senior year and graduate school years.

In addition, 95% of the respondents indicated they would like to receive a discount for showing a college student ID, which many downtown businesses also already offer. 70% also indicated they would like special college night events downtown. 28% said they would like to hear about sales and events downtown through Facebook, followed by 25% that prefer to hear by email.

Finally, the survey asked students about awareness and patronage of specific businesses downtown. The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce and Scranton Tomorrow will only share those specific responses with owners or authorized representatives of individual businesses.

Survey Background

The colleges of Lackawanna County have conducted the survey of their undergraduate students every two years since 2004.

Changes in the 2011 survey are as follows:

- TCMC joined the 7 colleges that participated in the previous surveys.
- Graduate and medical students were added to the survey.
- Questions about the amount spent in groceries, utilities and rent were added.
- Questions about participation in several events held in downtown Scranton were added.
- As in 2009, students were asked about awareness and use of specific downtown venues. The venues were updated for the 2011 survey to reflect the downtown business that have opened and/or closed.

Survey population

The survey sample was intentionally weighted to reflect the proportion of each school's enrollment as compared with the total population of students attending a college or university in Lackawanna County. Each school's sub-sample roughly represents the school's proportion of total undergraduate and graduate student population. The proportions did not match exactly because of student survey completion.

Graduate and Medical Students

Graduate students, including medical students, were included in the survey for the first time. As might be expected, when compared to the undergraduate students, graduate students are more likely to live in an off campus apartment (65% vs. 16%); have a car (91% vs. 63%) and were international students (4% vs. 1%). Of the 66% reporting to be from Pennsylvania, more graduate students were from Lackawanna County (60% vs. 45%). 50% of the graduate students were returning to school and 43% were continuing directly from college with two-thirds having living or attending college in the area prior to graduate school. 36% relocated to attend graduate school. Most graduate students completing the survey were between 21-24 years old (41%) and female (71%).