

DALTON COLLEGE

STRATEGIC PLAN, 1997-2000

September 1, 1997

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Analysis	3
Profile of Northwest Georgia	4
Region's Educational Attainment	5
Region's Economic Characteristics	7
Region's Academic Needs	9
Dalton College's Image Within the Region	12

ANALYSIS OF THE DALTON COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

In 1995, a comprehensive strategic planning effort was initiated in at Dalton College. Designed to help guide the College into the 21st century, the planning effort began with a number of institutional research projects which were completed in June 1996. The research phase of the comprehensive planning effort consisted of three key documents, completed during the 1995-96 academic year with broad-based input and direction from the faculty and staff.

These were:

- an Environmental Scan of Dalton College's service area, which sought to identify current and projected demographic, political, economic, and educational trends;
- an Image Study of the institution, designed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the College as perceived by its various publics and to recommend future actions to capitalize on the strengths and address the weaknesses;
- an Academic Needs Assessment, whose purpose was to identify the current and projected needs of the service area for programs at the postsecondary level.

The information contained in these research documents paints a relatively consistent picture of Dalton College, its external environment, and the educational needs of its service area. Several broad conclusions are evident:

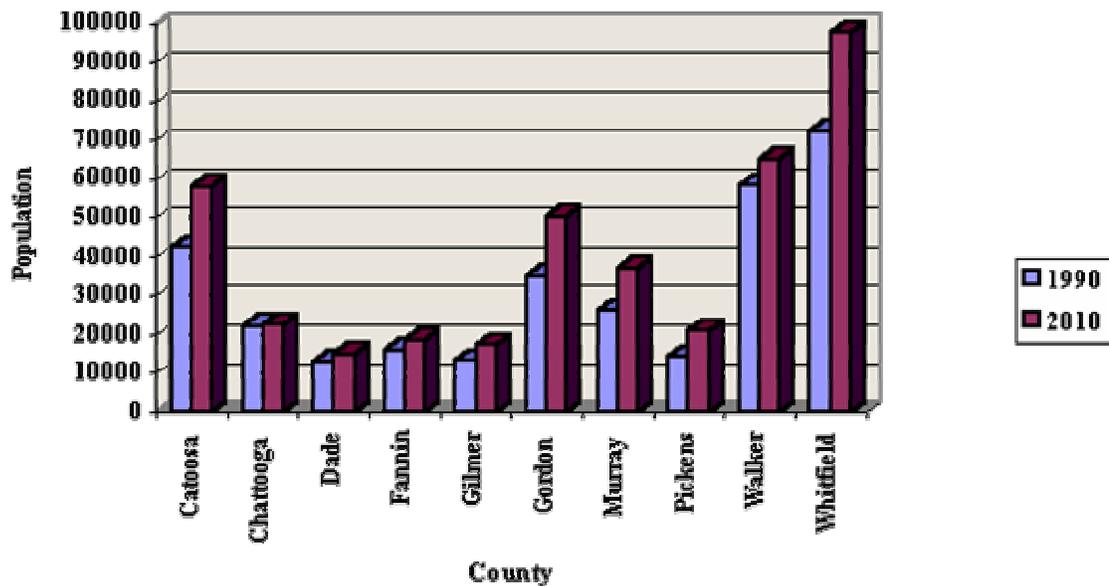
- Dalton College is favorably perceived within its service area, and is regarded as a positive force in the community at large.
- Northwest Georgia's population will continue to grow at a faster rate than most other areas of the state; the minority population will grow even faster.
- The educational level of the population is comparatively low, and the challenges in this arena are significant.
- The economic base of Northwest Georgia will continue to be dominated by manufacturing. Improving the quality and quantity of the work force will be critical to continued success.
- The service area is projected to require additional postsecondary programming at various levels, from continuing education offerings all the way through selected master's degrees.

In the following sections of this report, a more detailed look at the findings from these research efforts will be presented. This information has been used to form the foundation for Dalton College's planning effort.

A Profile of Northwest Georgia

In 1990, the area's population was 313,666; by the turn of the century this figure is expected to grow by about 50,000 residents to 362,538. Over the next fifteen years, the population is expected to reach 403,532, for an overall increase from 1990 to 2010 of almost 100,000 persons.

Northwest Georgia Population Projections, 1990-2010



Three major factors account for this growth. One is the presence of a significant manufacturing concentration in and around the area, particularly in a north-south corridor along Interstate 75. A second growth factor is the close proximity of the metropolitan Chattanooga area, for which the northernmost counties in the region serve, in part, as bedroom communities. A third factor in this equation is the inexorable growth of metropolitan Atlanta, with commuting populations now beginning to emerge as far north as Pickens and Gordon counties.

A related product of the manufacturing presence in Northwest Georgia has been the recent emergence of a large Hispanic community, particularly in Whitfield County. While the exact size of this population is difficult to determine, conservative estimates place the 1990 figure at 12,593, projected to almost double by 2010 to 22,848. Meanwhile, the "traditional" African-American minority population remains at about 3 percent of the total within the region.

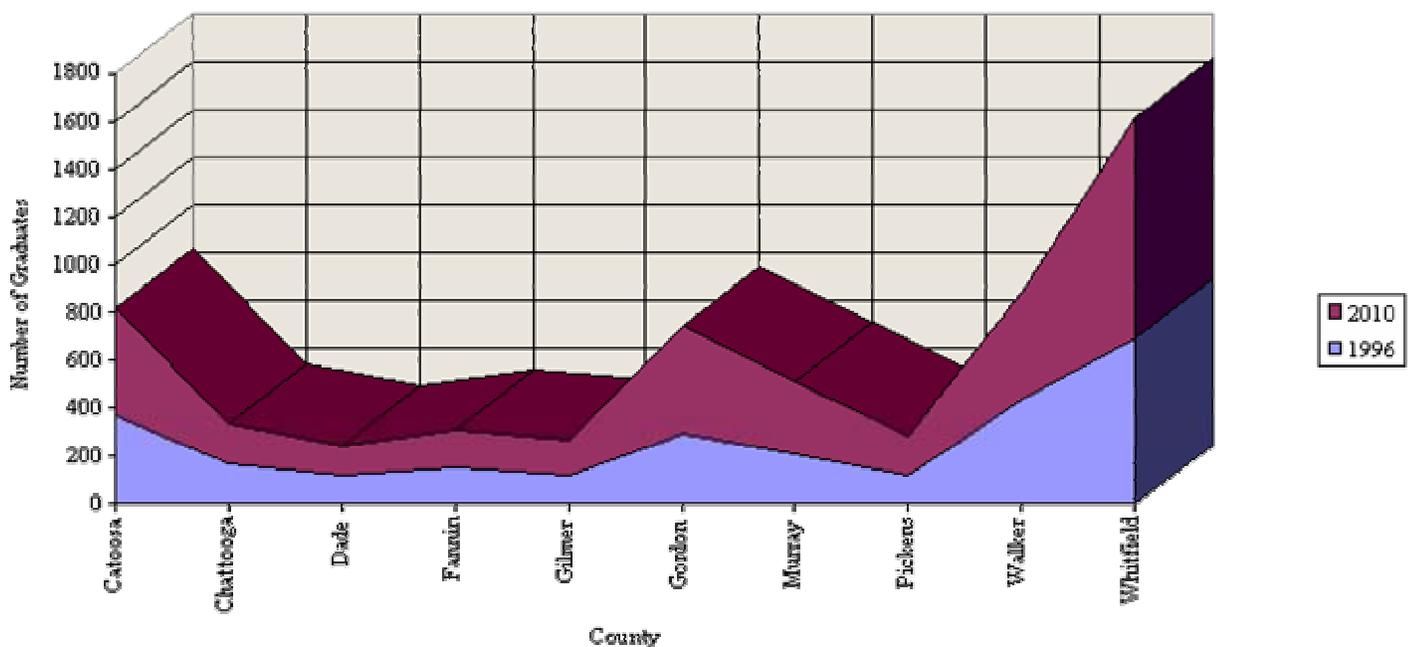
A Profile of the Region's Educational Attainment

Like many other parts of the state, Northwest Georgia's population may be characterized as undereducated. With the area's economy having been driven by manufacturing, thus providing a relatively steady supply of unskilled jobs, the region has, until recently, never been dependent upon formal education for its livelihood. Now, with the arrival of technology in textile manufacturing, that picture is beginning to change rather dramatically.

High school and college graduation rates are below the average for Georgia. A survey of the ten county region reveals that the percentage of residents over the age of 25 without a high school diploma ranges from a low of 37 percent in Catoosa County to a high of 50 percent in Chattooga County, as compared with a state average of 29 percent. Fortunately, many area residents are beginning to feel pressure from their employers to complete the GED, so over the last five years adult literacy activity has become increasingly heavy. For example, Dalton College's adult literacy program turned out 1,637 GED completers between 1990 and 1995. This figure becomes even more impressive in light of the fact that Dalton's program serves only two counties: Whitfield and Murray. Adult literacy programs in other counties within the region are likewise becoming increasingly busy.

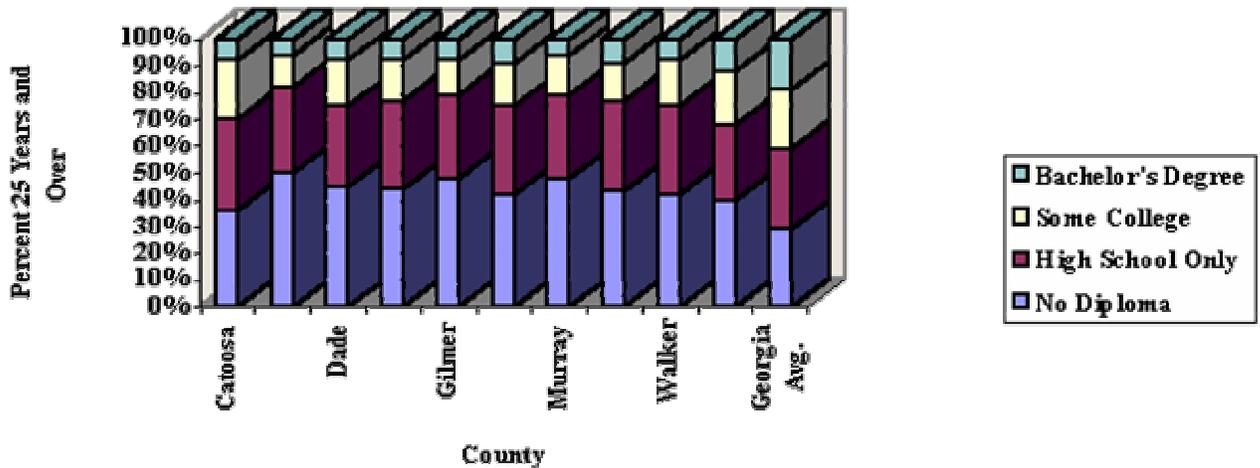
While high school dropout rates remain high throughout the area, the number of students projected to graduate from high school over the next fifteen years will also grow. The following chart depicts this growth.

High School Graduation Projections, 1996 to 2010



In the meantime, the number of Northwest Georgia residents who have completed a college education likewise remains below the state average. The table below shows the percentages for those who have completed some college but not a bachelor's degree, as well as for those who hold the baccalaureate. The average for those holding the bachelor's degree in the area is 8.3 percent. With the Georgia average at 19 percent, Northwest Georgia is clearly lacking in educated leadership. Only Whitfield County weighs in with double digits, at 12 percent. On the other hand, the percentage of the population which has completed at least some college reflects a significant population of potential non-traditional students. Based on 1990 census data, the state's Office of Planning and Budget estimates that, by 2000, the region's population between the ages of 25 and 44 will be 106,235.

Northwest Georgia High School and College Completion Rates, 1990



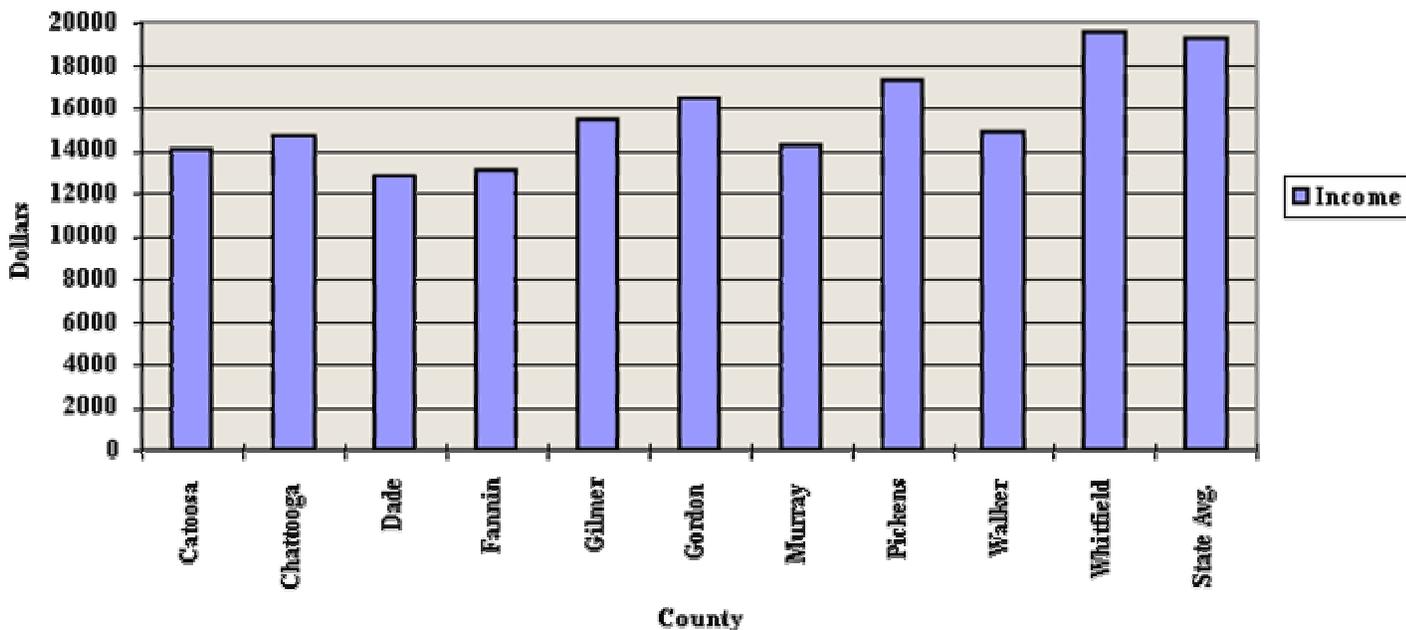
A Profile of the Region's Economic Characteristics

The manufacturing segment represents the mainstay of economic life in Northwest Georgia. Much of the area's hilly and mountainous terrain is unsuited for large scale agriculture, typical of most of North Georgia in general, so efforts have historically been directed toward developing a manufacturing base. The dominant force within the region is tufted textile production, which grew out of a cottage industry after World War II and which today accounts for about half of the world's carpet production. Dalton is the center of this industry, but significant components of it can also be found in the other counties within the region.

In 1994, manufacturing accounted for 49.9 percent of the region's employment, with retail trade representing 13.3 percent and government another 11.2 percent. Thus almost two-thirds of the area's economic base is business and industry-related. Over the last five years, the carpet industry has grown increasingly reliant upon technology, and this trend is expected to continue. With more exacting and efficient production methods required, electronic devices are now in common use within the carpet plants, and more knowledgeable workers are increasingly required.

A general overview of Northwest Georgia's economic health, as represented by average per capita income reveals a region of contrasts.

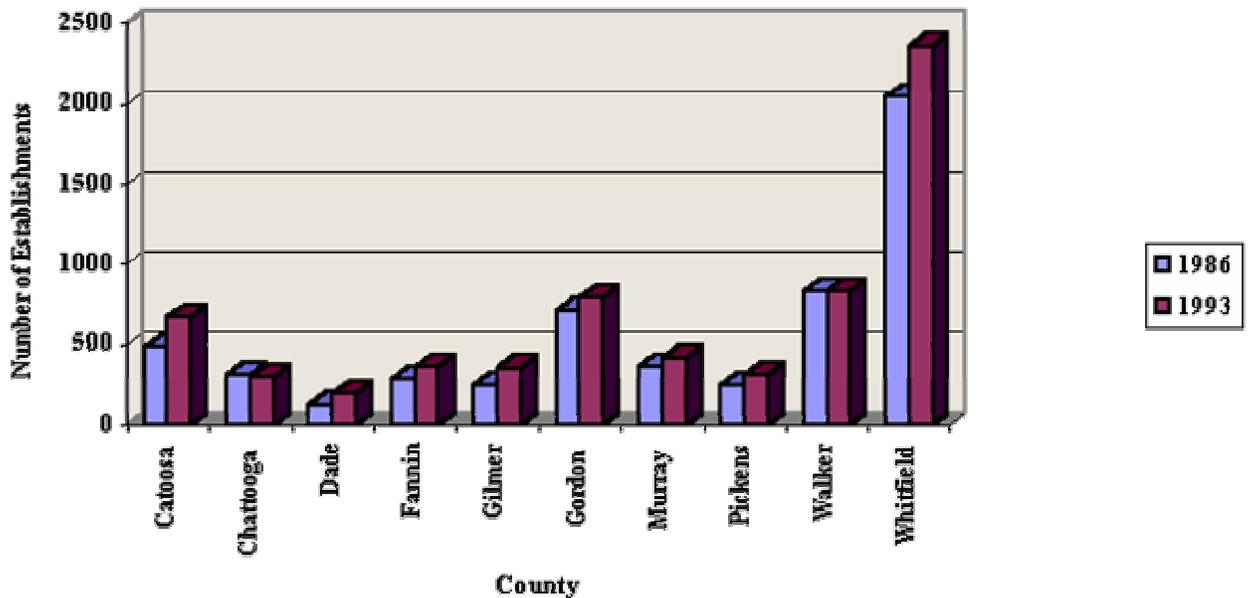
Northwest Georgia Per Capita Income, 1993



As can be noted from these figures, four of the ten counties in the region enjoy an income level that places them in the upper quartile among their counterparts cross the state, while another four are in the lower quartile. Overall, however, the economic picture for the area is reasonably sound, with predictions for moderate, steady growth.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this growth is the increase in the number of business establishments and the corresponding increase in the number of employees throughout the region.

Northwest Georgia Growth in Business Establishments, 1986-1993



Of the businesses represented in this table, 216 of them employ 100 or more employees. The goliath among the group, Shaw Industries, has in excess of 10,000 people on its payroll with plants in several counties within the region. The following graph shows the growth in business employees between 1986 and 1993.

A Profile of the Region's Academic Needs

To support business growth as well as the increasing population within the region in general, the educational system will need to be prepared to produce people in a variety of professional areas. Between 1990 and 2005, the occupational areas expecting the largest growth are secretaries, general managers and executives, elementary teachers, registered nurses, and general office clerks. Both current employment levels and projected annual openings by category are depicted in the table below.*

Current and Projected Employment, 1990-2005

Occupation	1990 Employment	2005 Employment	Annual Openings	Degree Required
General Managers	5,860	6,975	168	**B, G
First Line Supervisors	2,270	2,775	72	A, B
Sales Representatives	4,110	4,745	133	A, B, G
Other Managers	1,420	1,916	56	A, B, G
Bookkeepers, Accountants	2,060	2,199	50	A, B
Secretaries	4,720	5,821	179	A
General Office Clerks	4,150	5,241	132	A, B
Elementary Teachers	3,360	4,412	137	B, G
Registered Nurses	1,470	2,289	78	A, B, G

Figures include the 16 counties in the North Georgia and Coosa Valley Regional Development Center service areas.

***A=Associate Degree, B= Bachelor's Degree, G= Master's Degree*

As mentioned in the introduction, an Academic Needs Assessment was among the research projects completed for Dalton College during the 1995-96 academic year as part of the institution's strategic planning process. This assessment, completed by Georgia State University's Applied Research Center, is the best source of information available on current and projected program demand for Northwest Georgia. Taking current information on population trends and projections, economic patterns, educational attainment, and occupational projections, and then combining that data with the findings from three focus group sessions and extensive survey results, the Academic Needs Assessment was able to formulate current and projected unmet needs by level of educational offering and by general discipline area. Each of the areas identified will be briefly discussed in turn.

The Academic Needs Assessment found that there is high demand for expanded programming at the bachelor's and master's degree levels for business-related study. An examination of the findings, point specifically to the need for a BBA in general management and a "traditional" MBA, both with considerable flexibility in course scheduling. The Georgia Department of Labor estimates that 168 jobs for general managers, 133 jobs for sales representatives, and 72 jobs for sales supervisors will become available in Northwest Georgia each year between 1990 and 2005. Focus group and survey findings likewise revealed a high degree of interest in business programs, with considerable emphasis on the BBA.

As with business, the assessment process concluded that there is high demand for expanded programming in technical studies, particularly in the areas of computer applications and electronics-related fields. While this part of the assessment focused only on one-year certificate and associate degree levels of preparation, it is thought that future needs at those levels can be largely achieved with the existing resources of the three neighboring technical institutes and Dalton College's technical division. On the other hand, the new BAS degree with a concentration in technology appears to hold considerable promise. During the focus groups, area business and industry employers emphasized the need for a more technologically proficient work force, dubbing this a transition from "blue collar" to "gray collar." These employers cited the need for higher levels of proficiency in computer utilization, group dynamics, and communication. In subsequent discussions, the BAS in Technology Management was identified as a program with high potential in meeting an immediate need for area industry.

The Needs Assessment also found that the field of education presented a moderate degree of need, with the demand stronger for elementary than for secondary specializations. The Georgia Department of Labor projects that Northwest Georgia will offer 70 secondary openings and 137 elementary openings each year between 1990 and 2005. Because of the influx of Spanish-speaking individuals into portions of the region, a critical demand for ESOL teachers was identified by a number of focus group participants.

The Academic Needs Assessment identified several other programs for which at least moderate need is projected. It appears, however, that these needs can be met with current resources. Among these are registered nursing, a program in carpet design and styling, and continuing education programs in computer literacy, communications, team building, mathematics skills, leadership development, Spanish, and English as a Second Language.

As a part of the assessment process, survey respondents were asked a series of questions to determine their potential interest in postsecondary education and the general parameters within which they would consider continuing their educations at that level. A brief profile is instructive and contains certain implications for the delivery of postsecondary education in Northwest Georgia.

- 31 percent of the general public survey respondents anticipated enrolling in a postsecondary institution over the next five years.
- Of that postsecondary-bound group, 66 percent indicated an interest in colleges rather than technical schools.
- Among those planning to enroll in colleges, 49 percent indicated a preference for Dalton College.
- Of those planning to opt for a technical institute, 46 percent indicated a preference for Walker Technical Institute.
- Among those who are interested in postsecondary careers, almost 20 percent expressed a desire to earn a bachelor's degree, while another 40 percent held the associate degree as their goal.
- Gaining employment at a better job or pursuing a different career were listed as the chief reasons for seeking postsecondary education among 80 percent of the respondents who expressed a desire to continue their education.
- For 43 percent of the postsecondary-bound respondents, the most likely barrier between them and their educations was their job their job schedules. Flexibility in program offerings is thus a key.
- The variety of program offerings and the issue of safety and security were the most persuasive factors among respondents in selecting an institution.
- Only 10 percent of the postsecondary-bound respondents are willing to commute more than 50 miles to a college or technical school.
- Over 80 percent of the respondents indicated that public colleges and universities are important in ensuring the well-being of Northwest Georgia.
- Over 60 percent of the respondents believe that there is a need for additional four-year programming in Northwest Georgia.

A Profile of Dalton College's Image Within the Region

Another part of the planning research effort involved the creation of an Image Study Committee, working in collaboration with the Center for Business and Economic Services at Troy State University. The overall purpose of this study was to determine the image projected by Dalton College. For analysis purposes, the publics which Dalton College serves were divided into eight groups: students, faculty, professional staff, classified staff, alumni, employers, high school students, and the general public. Each of these groups was extensively surveyed to determine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the institution. Some of the results are presented below.

- 80% of currently enrolled students would recommend Dalton College to family or friends.
- Currently enrolled students regard Dalton College as being as good as, or better than, Georgia Southern, Kennesaw, UTC and West Georgia. Berry and UGA were perceived as being better than Dalton College.
- 85.4% of alumni thought that Dalton College had adequately prepared them for their careers.
- 36.5% of the general public surveyed think that Dalton College is a four-year school.
- 90% of the general public would recommend Dalton College to their families and friends.
- 38% of the general public think that Dalton College should become a four-year school.
- 12% of the general public think that Dalton College should better inform the public about opportunities available.
- 72% of the employers surveyed have employed a Dalton College graduate in the past.
- 95% of employers with Dalton College graduates are pleased with the performance of Dalton College students, and 96% said they would consider hiring Dalton College graduates in the future.
- 45% of employers recommended that Dalton College become a four-year school.
- 21% of current high school students who plan to go on to college or tech

school indicated Dalton College as their first choice, followed by UGA (12%), Georgia Southern (6.7%) and West Georgia (6.5%).

- 53% of the faculty, 40% of the professional staff, 55% of the classified staff, 53% of currently enrolled students, and 52% of the high school students surveyed thought that a regional name would better identify the institution.

Review of the survey responses identified five issues to be addressed. Each of the following five issues (parking, public relations/communications, registration, athletics/recreation, and the name of College) were perceived by two or more publics surveyed as a weakness of Dalton College or an area in which the College's image could be improved. Each of these issues were addressed and suggestions for improvement or a process for investigation offered as follows:

1. Parking

The general consensus of all those who were asked about parking was that it was inadequate. Of all the issues, parking received the poorest ratings across the board. Since the best solution appears to be more parking spaces, the committee recommended that the construction of a parking deck be pursued with due haste.

In a related issue, the Committee recommended that efforts continue to be made to insure that parking lots and all outdoor areas of our campus are well lighted and safe. Consideration should be given to placing security call boxes in parking lots.

2. Public Relations/Communications

Faculty and staff as well as employers and general public felt that the College needs to do a better job informing our service area about programs and activities at the College. Credit programs were listed most frequently as needing greater exposure, but non-credit programs and activities were mentioned as well.

The committee recommended additional support for the public relations staff. Additional writing, design, secretarial, and media support/funding would create a more productive public relations operation. Consideration should be given to: 1.) using billboards at various times; 2.) additional signage on campus announcing College activities; 3.) kiosks with continuous running video on campus and in other public places. Also, more frequent exposure of faculty and students in local media would be helpful.

Professional staff responses indicated a need for better communication around the campus, especially between faculty and staff. The committee felt that several initiatives including *The Quill*, *DC Weekly*, Presidential updates, memos between faculty and administration, and the strategic planning process

have and will continue to improve communications. Programs designed to improve internal and external campus communications (such as *Connections* by Noel-Levitz) should be previewed to determine their utility for the College.

3. Registration

The committee recommended that the entire advisement/orientation/registration process be examined. A task force as a part of the strategic planning initiative might study issues and recommend changes. Some possibilities include: a longer time for advisement, telephone and online registration, centralized registration (less back and forth for students), receptionist for admissions and business office and /or switchboard operator (information center), and interpersonal skills training for front line staff.

4. Athletics/Recreation

According to the Image Study, one of the areas most frequently perceived as below average was intramural athletics. In addition to intramurals, the lack of availability of recreational facilities and the absence of intercollegiate athletic competition were cited as detracting from the image of Dalton College.

Some comments relative to intramurals indicated a lack of awareness, but most respondents cited class conflicts and no time. The Study recommended that consideration be given to including an activity period two or three days each week during which there would be no classes. Perhaps this schedule change could coincide with the switch to the semester system.

Although some comments referred to lack of playing fields, more respondents cited lack of access to existing facilities. Attempts have been made recently to increase access to the swimming pool, weight room, and gymnasium, and the committee recommends a continuation of expanded availability.

In order to improve recreational, social, educational, and cultural activities for students, the student activity fee should be increased. Perhaps a sliding fee based on a per quarter hour charge would be feasible.

The question of intercollegiate athletics is a multifaceted and emotional issue. The committee recommends that a task force be appointed to investigate the feasibility of Dalton College participating in intercollegiate athletics.

5. Name change

Another emotional issue is the name of the College. Of all groups surveyed, the only ones not in favor of a name change were professional staff and alumni. Northwest Georgia College was the most popular alternative to Dalton College. However, the Committee recommended that a name change not be considered at present. The divisiveness of a proposed name change would interfere with the accomplishment of several current goals of the College. However, if/when the institution changes its mission to include baccalaureate programming, a change of name for the College should be proposed.

In summary, the research efforts of the College have yielded an array of issues and concerns that the College must take into account when planning for the next three to five years. This section serves as a summary of the three primary thrusts of that effort: the Environmental Scan, the Image Study, and the Academic Needs Assessment, each providing part of the foundation for the Strategic Plan for 1997-2000.