



Tacoma Community College

GIS Improves Marketing at Local Community College

Problem

Needed to analyze location and demographic characteristics of continuing education students for better target marketing

Goals

- Profile past and present CE students and their educational interests.
- Identify new continuing education market segments.
- Develop new market-driven programming.
- Implement cost-effective target marketing.

Results

- Fine-tuned brochure production and placement to reach refined market segments
- Fewer but more effective mailings
- Ability to track effectiveness of strategies
- Reduced costs with increased enrollments and revenue

Tacoma Community College (TCC) is located in the South Puget Sound region of western Washington. It has a service district of 193 square miles and serves a population of 325,000. TCC offers a continuing education program that provides personal enrichment courses, continuing professional education, business and customized contract training, and industry certification training and testing.

The Challenge

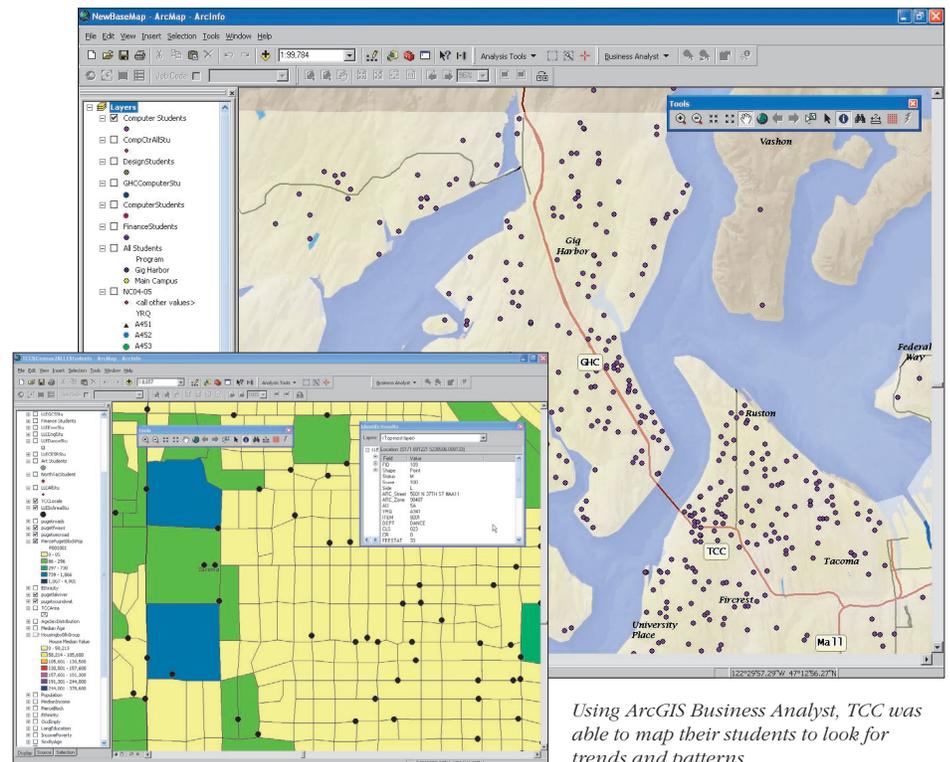
TCC wanted to identify where continuing education (CE) students live and compile demographic data about them to better understand and serve its market area. By analyzing this data, TCC could identify new CE market segments and develop market-driven programs to boost enrollment and revenue. The problem it faced was an abundance of data that was difficult to interpret, particularly with limited resources. TCC needed a software solution that could sift through the data and accurately analyze location and demographics to better predict the effectiveness of new marketing programs.

The Solution

TCC is part of the Washington State Community and Technical College system. The college has a site license for ESRI® geographic information system (GIS) software. TCC's program analyst and support specialist Terry Smith had been using ESRI's ArcInfo® software in support of a grant the college received to build an environmental science lab. ArcInfo is used in the lab to supplement environmental science classes as well as geology and marine biology.

“Tacoma Community College means education, but it is still a business. ArcGIS Business Analyst allows our college to see more information than any other solution, focus on certain aspects, and find the answers we need.”

Terry Smith
Program Analyst and Support Specialist
Tacoma Community College



Using ArcGIS Business Analyst, TCC was able to map their students to look for trends and patterns.

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ESRI Software Used

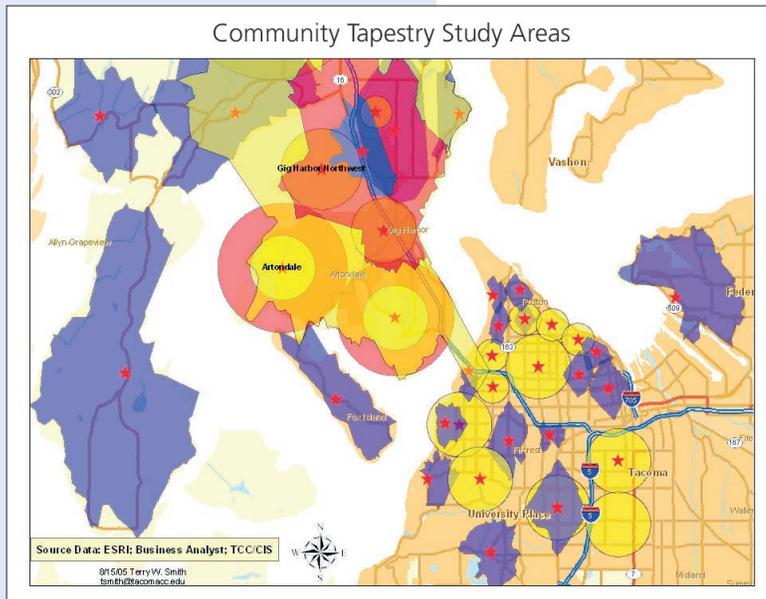
- ArcGIS Business Analyst
- ArcInfo

Data Used

- ESRI Community Tapestry

"When I started using ArcInfo, I knew GIS had amazing potential for many applications, and I have been using it ever since," says Smith. "When I attended the ESRI 2005 International User Conference in San Diego, I saw [ArcGIS®] Business Analyst as a system application that could provide us with a solution. I told my supervisors that if we really wanted to do marketing, this was what we should use. It would give us more information than anything else I had seen and allow us to focus on what was important to find answers."

In addition to ArcInfo, Smith began using ArcGIS Business Analyst to geocode student locations on a map to see if there were any revealing trends. He showed this original map to his supervisors, and eventually, the vice president for enterprise and workforce development assigned him to a special project to expand applications and conduct more analysis.



ArcGIS Business Analyst helped TCC implement targeted market campaigns.

For More Information



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Smith then created a demographic profile of TCC students and the service area. He downloaded student enrollment information from fall 2003 to spring 2005 for continuing education programs including personal enrichment (Gig Harbor and main campuses), continuing professional education, and business and industry certification training. He then loaded the data into ArcGIS Business Analyst for geocoding, or creating address location points on a map. Student residences were plotted by basemap data that was included in the software product. This enabled him to establish a visualization of where the students lived and see if there were any specific trends such as dense areas of population or increased traffic patterns.

Smith then looked at Census 2000 block group-level data including population density, income, age, education, ethnicity, and TIGER files. He drilled down to the neighborhood level using the ArcGIS Business Analyst Site Prospecting tool and identified 30 subzones with varying demographic profiles. These subzones, and the students within them, were profiled using ESRI's Community™ Tapestry™ market segmentation data. "Right away I saw that we could

really implement a target marketing approach. For example, we saw almost immediately that our financial classes, including sessions on investing, were attended by students living in lower-income neighborhoods, not the more affluent areas as we had assumed," says Smith. "This software took the assumptions right out of how we were marketing these classes and showed us where we should be looking to attract new students."

Results

Through the use of GIS, TCC has been able to geographically and demographically profile its past and present CE students and their educational interests. It has also been able to identify new CE market segments and develop new market-driven programming.

TCC is also in the process of implementing cost-effective target marketing campaigns including increasing the production of mini brochures and target mailings and expanding large-brochure distribution to include brochure racks in high-density residential complexes. Most significant, TCC has changed its programming strategies by asking, who is our target audience? instead of, what should we offer?

Using ArcGIS Business Analyst has provided TCC with a vast array of marketing capabilities. It is continually refining market segments and identifying new segments and locations as well as implementing surveys and focus groups. The college is able to market more effectively with fewer mailings and can easily track the effectiveness of these strategies. Most important, it is on track to reduce costs while increasing enrollments and revenue.

To learn more about ArcGIS Business Analyst, visit www.esri.com/ba.