

# RESEARCH BRIEF

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## EMPLOYER SURVEY FOR 1998-99 WORKING GRADUATES

Employer satisfaction with St. Petersburg Junior College (SPJC) graduates is a critical component of the strategic planning process at the institution. Accordingly, the Institutional Assessment Group developed an Employer Survey designed to measure employer satisfaction with graduates' preparation for work. Specifically, the purposes of the survey were:

- to attain insight into employer perceptions regarding technical and performance skills of SPJC graduates,
- to gain information to supplement college data for Performance Based Incentive Funding, and
- to identify employers who might be available to participate with the college program activities or to provide opportunities for student training or placement.

Working students who graduated in the 1998-99 reporting year and who completed the Recent Alumni Survey identified the employers who would receive the Employer Survey form by (1) indicating that their work was related to their studies, (2) agreeing that their employer could be contacted, and (3) giving the name and address of the employer. Two hundred eighty businesses were contacted. There were 143 surveys returned for a response rate of 51.0%.

The findings of the Employer Survey of 1998-99 graduates are summarized below:

- Employers indicated high levels of satisfaction with SPJC graduates' technical and performance skills. Eight of the 10 skills received a mean score of 6 or higher on a 7-point scale where 7 equals excellent:
  - 1) possesses necessary reading skills,
  - 2) uses written communication skills effectively,
  - 3) participates as a team player, ,
  - 4) uses oral communication skills effectively,
  - 5) chooses ethical courses of action,
  - 6) works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds,
  - 7) acquires, interprets and uses information effectively, and
  - 8) exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management.

For these skills, the percentage of employers responding with a rate of 6 or higher ranged between 73.5% and 87.4%.

The remaining skill areas received a mean score of 5.3 to 5.5. These areas were:

- (1) possesses necessary mathematics skills, and
- (2) possesses effective computer skills

For these skills, the percentage of employers responding with a rate of 5 or higher ranged between 58.1% and 62.5%.

- Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the employers indicated they would hire another SPJC graduate. No employer indicated they would not hire another SPJC graduate.
- In order for the College to qualify for Performance Based Incentive Funding, its graduates must either be working in a field related to their SPJC degree program or earning \$9.00 per hour. The majority of the employers (85.5%) reported that SPJC graduates earned \$9.00 or more per hour.
- Fifty percent or more of the employers of 1998-99 graduates expressed an interest in participating in two of the college's activities: 52.4% (75) were interested in providing input about the educational and training needs for their workforce; 51.0% (73) expressed a willingness to assist in job placement of graduates.

Employer responses with respect to technical and performance skills of 1998-99 SPJC graduates were compared to responses of employers who were questioned about 1997-98 SPJC graduates. In the preceding year, 137 of the 287 employers who were surveyed responded for a response rate of 47.7%.

Employers were asked about the performance in the same skill areas each year. Table 1 shows each skill and the mean of the responses and the percentage of employers responding 5, 6, or 7 on the 7-point scale. Two skill area has shown improvement and four remained the same as the previous year. The skills that demonstrated a slight improvement in 1998-99 compared to 1997-98 for a rating of 6 or higher were:

- Exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management (74.2% 1998-99; 72% 1997-98) a difference of 2.2%
- Acquires, interprets and uses information effectively (73.5% 1998-99; 71.6% 1997-98) a difference of 1.9%

Table 1.

### 1998-99 Employer Responses Compared to 1997-98 Employer Responses

Competencies and Foundation Skills	1997-98					1998-99				
	N	Mean	Employer Rating			N	Mean	Employer Rating		
			5	6	7			5	6	7
Possesses necessary reading skills	137	6.5	6.6%	25.5%	61.3%	143	6.4	9.8%	26.6%	60.8%
Uses written communication skills effectively	137	6.2	13.1%	29.9%	47.4%	143	6.2	15.4%	34.3%	46.2%
Uses oral communication skills effectively	132	6.0	15.2%	30.3%	43.2%	143	6.1	16.8%	30.8%	41.3%
Possesses effective computer skills (e.g. computing, word proc.)	135	5.6	20.7%	23.7%	25.2%	143	5.3	20.3%	23.8%	34.3%
Possesses necessary mathematics skills	136	5.8	19.1%	36.8%	25.7%	143	5.5	19.1%	36.8%	25.7%
Exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management	137	5.9	15.3%	28.5%	43.5%	143	6.0	15.4%	29.4%	44.8%
Chooses ethical courses of action	133	6.1	17.3%	28.6%	46.6%	143	6.1	10.5%	36.4%	44.8%
Participates as a team player	134	6.2	11.9%	26.1%	52.2%	143	6.2	9.1%	31.5%	49.7%
Works with individuals from diverse backgrounds	135	6.1	12.6%	25.9%	50.4%	143	6.1	9.8%	34.9%	47.6%
Acquires, interprets and uses information effectively	134	5.9	12.7%	30.6%	41.0%	143	6.0	18.1%	33.6%	39.9%

Improvements are continually being shown for SPJC graduates. Over ninety-six percent (96.0%) of the employers indicated they would hire another 1997-98 SPJC graduate compared to 97.0% of the employers of 1998-99 graduates. Earnings of \$9.00 or more decreased slightly for 1998-99 graduates by 5.2 % as compared with the previous year graduates' of (90.7%). In addition, a decrease in employer's willingness to participate in college activities was noticed (see Table 2.).

Table 2.

College Activity	1996-97		1997-98	
	Total Respondents	Willingness to Participate	Total Respondents	Willingness to Participate
Serve on Advisory Committee	103	42.9%	103	30.7%
Placement of student in co-op internship	102	67.6%	102	48.2%
Job placement of graduates	103	70.9%	103	51.0%
Participation in job fairs/other community events	89	48.3%	89	30.1%
Provide input educational/training for their workforce	94	79.8%	94	52.4%

In conclusion, employers have indicated moderate levels of satisfaction with SPJC programs and training for some time. Results indicate that A.S. degree and Postsecondary Vocational Certificate programs are achieving their intended objective of preparing students for work.

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