

RESEARCH BRIEF

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LONG-TERM ALUMNI SURVEY

How and What 1997-1998 Alumni Are Doing after Graduation

In Spring 2002, the Office of Institutional Research conducted a pilot project in support of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness' efforts to learn about the ongoing activities of St Petersburg College's alumni three or four years after graduation. The purpose of this brief is to report the results of that project.

As part of the project a Long-Term Alumni Survey (LTA) was developed containing 18 items asking graduates about

- their educational status after leaving SPC,
- current employment information,
- their primary reason for attending SPC,
- their level of satisfaction with SPC services and offices while attending the college,
- the overall academic preparation received,
- their willingness to recommend SPC to others, and
- potential interest in the new baccalaureate degree programs.

All items were closed-ended, with the exception of written answers about current job title and field of study. The purpose of the survey was to learn what problems the Office of Institutional Effectiveness might encounter in collecting information about alumni several years after the completion of their SPC program and to test the validity of the survey items.

The survey was administered by mail during an eight-week period from April 2002 to June 2002 to students who had completed their studies during reporting year 1997-98. The survey included an embodied letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope for its return. Names and addresses were obtained from the Placement and Follow-Up file, which is used to collect data for the Florida Education Placement Information Program (FETPIP).

A total of 2,672 graduates received the survey. Table 1 shows the number of surveys returned by type of award earned. Two hundred ninety-nine (299) A.A. alumni, 117 A.S. alumni, and 5 Certificates (CT.) alumni responded. The overall response rate was 15.2% (10.8% A.A. degree alumni; 4.2% A.S. alumni; and 0.2% CT. alumni).

Table 1: Graduates and Survey Respondents

	Number Of Graduates	Percentage Of Alumni	Number of Respondents	Percentage Of Respondents
AWARD				
A.A.	2,033	73.6	299	10.8
A.S.	669	24.2	117	4.2
Certificate	60	2.2	5	.02
TOTAL	2,762	100.0%	421	15.2%

SPC's two year programs prepare students for continued academic work at a college or university (A.A.) or prepare students to enter the workforce (A.S. and Certificate). However, small numbers of A.S. students also transfer to a

college or university. The survey requested information about the level of formal education attained by the respondent. Table 2 shows responses of the 421 respondents to the survey. Note that the percentages shown in the tables of this report are based on the number of responses to a particular question. The same number of graduates may not have responded to each question in the survey.

Two hundred sixty-five respondents (265, 62.9%) indicated they continued their education, with 187 (70.6%) earning a degree higher than the Associate degree. The highest degree earned by a respondent was the doctorate (2, 0.8%). One hundred sixty-one respondents (161, 60.7%) earned a Bachelor's degree (AA-154, AS-7); 24 (9.1%) earned a Master's degree. The majority of the 265 respondents (95, 35.8%) indicated the major reason for continuing their education was the requirement for entrance into the work field. The most frequent reason cited for continuing education by A.A. degree alumni was "required to enter desired work field" (39.5%); for A.S. degree alumni it was "to increase earnings" (32.3%).

Table 2: Education

	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Highest degree held			Location of educational institution recently attended		
Associate's	77	29.1	Florida	248	93.6
Bachelor's	161	60.7	Georgia	4	1.5
Master's	24	9.1	Alabama	2	0.7
Doctor's	2	0.7	Another U. S. state	9	3.4
Other	1	0.4	Out of the U.S.	1	0.4
Total	265	100.0	No response	1	0.4
			Total	265	100.0
Major reason to continue education			How well did SPC prepare for continuing education		
Required to enter desired work field	95	35.8	Exceptionally well	76	28.7
To satisfy current job/career requirements	23	8.7	Very well	151	57.0
To learn a new occupation	34	12.8	Adequately	33	12.4
To obtain or maintain a licenser certification	11	4.2	Poorly	3	1.1
To increase earnings	45	17.0	Not at all	1	0.4
For self-improvement	51	19.2	No response	1	0.4
To maintain veteran's benefits/financial aid	1	0.4	Total	265	100.0
Other	5	1.9			
Total	265	100.0	Comparison of quality of education provided by SPC with that of another institution		
Educational institution recently attended			Much better	39	14.7
Trade or business	4	1.5	Somewhat better	40	15.1
2-year college (SPC or another college)	31	11.7	About the same	134	50.6
4-year college or university	217	81.9	Somewhat poorer	16	6.0
Other	11	4.2	Much poorer	3	1.1
No response	2	0.7	Unable to determine	18	6.8
Total	265	100.0	No response	15	5.7
			Total	265	100.0

The majority of the 265 alumni (217 -81.9%) who continued their education attended a four-year college or university. This was true for most alumni with A.A. degrees (202-76.8%). Equal numbers of A.S. degree alumni attended a four-year institution as a two-year college (45.2%). The majority of the respondents (248, 93.6%) attended an institution in the state of Florida.

The type of institution attended by the alumni influenced the major area of study. Examples of areas of study included Marketing, B.S. in Nursing, Human Resources Administration, Psychology, Mass Communications, Social Science, International Business, Humanities, Education, Fire Arts, Real Estate, Doctor of Pharmacy, Chemical Engineering, Natural Resource Management, Public Leadership, Environmental Science and Policy, Veterinary Science, and Public Health.

Two hundred twenty-seven (227, 85.7%) of the alumni indicated that SPC prepared them to continue their education exceptionally well to very well. When alumni were asked "How would you compare the quality of education provided at SPC with that of the institution you attended after SPC graduation? Seventy-nine (79, 29.8%) felt that their quality of education at SPC was better than the institution they most recently attended and 134 (50.6%) felt the education was about the same.

Table 3 describes the employment activities of the respondents. Out of 420 respondents who answered the questions regarding employment, 360 (85.7%) were employed and 297 (82.5%) stated that their current job was related to their SPC major. Specifically, 76.4% of the respondents worked full time, 9.3% worked part time. Approximately 14% of the respondents were unemployed. Of the 14% who were unemployed, 4.0% were unemployed but looking for work.

Table 3. Employment and Income

<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Current Activities				
Employed FT	321	76.4	Exception well	57 15.8
Employed PT	39	9.3	Very well	138 38.3
Unemployed but looking for work	17	4.0	Adequately	127 35.3
Cont. Education	26	6.2	Poorly	5 1.4
Armed Forces	5	1.2	Not at all	26 7.2
Homemaker	3	0.7	No response	7 1.9
Retired	2	0.5	Total	360 100.0
Other	7	1.7		
Total	420	100.0		
Related occupations to SPC major				
Highly related	169	46.9	Earnings per hour	
Moderate related	79	22.0	Less than \$7.50	5 1.4
Slight related	49	13.6	\$7.51 - 10.00	23 6.4
Not related	62	17.2	\$10.01 - 15.00	108 30.0
No response	1	0.3	\$15.01 - 20.00	109 30.3
Total	360	100.0	\$20.01 or more	103 28.6
			No response	12 3.3
			Total	360 100.0

The majority of the employed respondents (195, 54.1%) indicated that SPC prepared them exceptionally well to very well for their occupation. Another 127 (35.3%) felt their preparation was adequate. Only 31 (8.6%) felt that SPC prepared them poorly or not at all for their present employment.

Over 300 alumni replied to the open-ended question, "What is your current job title?" Examples of titles included News Director, Nurse, Investment Reporting Consultant, Teacher, Accountant, Transmission and Power Distribution Engineer, Science Lab Coordinator, Funeral Director, Veterinary Technician, Director of Maintenance, Aquatic Biologist, Analyst, Human Resources Coordinator, Deputy Sheriff, Pharmacy Intern, Bartender, Project Engineer, Physical Therapist Assistant, Dental Hygienist, Microfilm Editor, Credit Analyst, Sales Associate, Register Nurse, Doctor of Oriental Medicine, and Journalist.

Three hundred forty-eight (348, 96.7%) of the currently employed respondents (full-time or part-time) provided information on their hourly wage. Almost as many alumni reported earning between \$15.01 - \$20.00 hourly (109, 30.3%) as reported \$10.01 - \$15.00 (108, 30.0%). An additional 103 (28.6%) reported earning \$20.01 or more per hour.

As shown in Table 4, the two top reasons for attending SPC given by 417 respondents were: Offered the courses wanted (118, 28.0%) and "Convenient location (108, 25.7%).

Table 4. Reasons for choice to attend SPC

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Reasons		
Offered the courses wanted	118	28.0
Convenient location	108	25.7
Good academic reputation	76	18.1
Cost	43	10.2
Recommended by parents or relative	18	4.3
Recommended by friends	5	1.2
Recommended by high school personnel	4	1.0
Small class size	17	4.0
Other	29	6.9
No response	4	0.7
Total	421	100.0

Alumni rated their satisfaction with specific campus services, offices, and academic factors. Table 5 presents the results for the student satisfaction questions for all respondents, the mean of the responses, and the percentage responding to each value on a 7-point scale, with 7 being the highest (Excellent) and 1 being the lowest (Very poor). Overall, 86.9% of the alumni rated the quality of services/offices as good (5.6).

Respondents were somewhat satisfied with all directly related academic offices or services. The mean values ranged from a high of 5.8 for Quality of Instruction to a low of 4.8 for Use of technology for instruction.

The mean scores for support services varied from a low of 1.5 for Job Placement services to a high of 5.2 for Library services. Besides the Library, Registration procedures (5.1) and the Bookstore (5.0) had mean values of 5 or higher. Of the 15 services listed, alumni were satisfied with seven.

In general respondents were satisfied with facilities. The mean scores ranged from a high of 5.2 for attractiveness of campus to a low of 4.6 for Parking facilities.

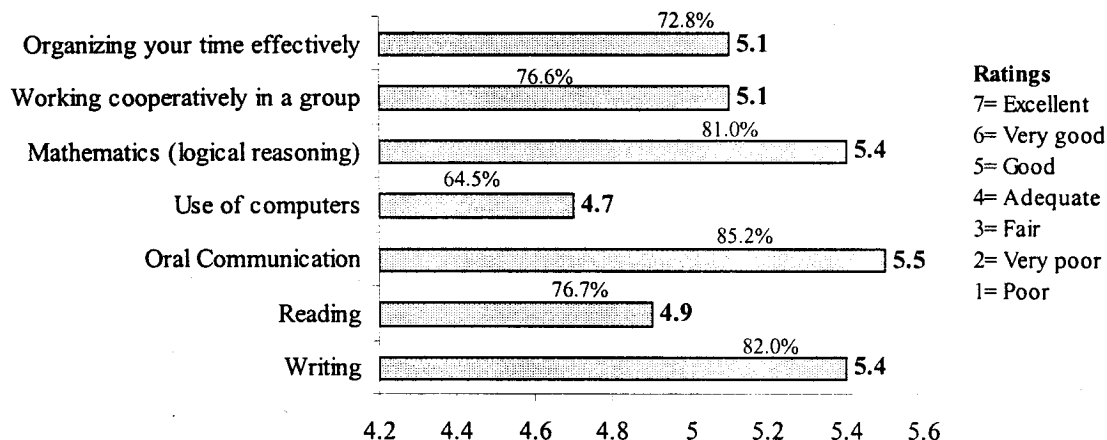
In the areas of general education, the alumni indicated satisfaction with skill and personal growth achieved while attending SPC. Chart 1 shows the seven skills and personal growth areas evaluated by the respondents. The mean varied from a high 5.5 (oral communication skills) to a low of 4.7 (use of computers).

The responses to the question, "Would you recommend SPC to others?" expresses most clearly how highly our alumni rate St. Petersburg College. Four hundred six (406, 96.4%) of the 421 respondents indicated they would recommend SPC to a friend or family member entering college.

Finally, alumni were asked if they would be interested in having SPC staff contact them about enrolling in one of the new baccalaureate programs. Sixty-four (64, 15.2%) of the 421 respondents indicated that they would be interested while 342 (81.2%) responded that they would not be interested and 15 (3.6%) did not respond.

Table 5. Services and Offices Ratings

Office/Services	Student Rating									
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NA	N	MEAN
Support Services										
Business Office	17.5%	18.0%	28.1%	19.2%	4.8%	1.4%	0.5%	10.3%	416	4.7
Academic advising	21.5%	18.6%	21.0%	19.6%	7.8%	5.1%	1.5%	4.9%	409	4.8
Job placement services	2.2%	5.1%	4.6%	10.3%	8.6%	4.6%	3.2%	61.4%	409	1.5
Library services	22.1%	23.3%	29.6%	16.7%	3.2%	1.0%	0.5%	3.6%	412	5.2
Financial aid services	12.7%	12.9%	12.4%	11.7%	5.9%	2.9%	2.0%	39.5%	410	3.0
Availability of advisor	18.8%	20.0%	21.8%	17.1%	8.1%	3.7%	2.2%	8.3%	409	4.6
Registration procedures	18.7%	21.7%	27.5%	20.4%	5.6%	3.2%	2.7%	0.2%	411	5.1
Student activities (clubs, programs, organizations)	8.6%	10.5%	12.0%	12.7%	3.4%	2.0%	0.0%	50.7%	408	2.5
Bookstore	16.3%	20.5%	32.0%	20.0%	5.6%	3.2%	1.5%	1.0%	410	5.0
New student orientation	11.4%	13.8%	19.8%	17.5%	4.4%	3.5%	1.7%	27.9%	405	3.5
Specialized academic support service (e.g. SSS, Pathways, WOW, NIP, OSSO)	8.7%	6.2%	6.9%	4.7%	1.5%	1.0%	0.5%	70.5%	403	1.6
Supplemental Instructional Centers/Tutoring (e.g. Learning Support Center)	17.1%	13.2%	16.1%	10.4%	4.2%	0.2%	1.0%	37.7%	403	3.4
Out-of-class access to computers	14.4%	13.1%	20.5%	10.6%	5.2%	2.0%	0.7%	33.4%	404	3.4
Equipment	11.4%	17.7%	25.1%	19.4%	7.0%	1.5%	0.0%	17.9%	402	4.1
Food services	4.0%	6.5%	14.4%	15.4%	9.5%	4.7%	4.5%	41.0%	402	2.4
Facilities										
Facilities	13.9%	18.6%	34.7%	23.3%	3.5%	0.5%	0.5%	5.2%	404	4.9
Attractiveness of the campus	19.2%	23.8%	31.4%	16.2%	4.7%	1.5%	1.0%	2.2%	407	5.2
Parking facilities	11.1%	16.2%	29.0%	21.1%	13.3%	5.9%	2.9%	0.5%	407	4.6
Security/safety on campus	20.9%	24.1%	25.6%	17.7%	5.7%	1.7%	1.0%	3.2%	406	5.1
Directly Related Academic Services										
Quality of instruction	29.9%	32.3%	25.5%	9.0%	2.9%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	412	5.8
Course materials	22.4%	31.4%	29.7%	11.9%	3.2%	0.7%	0.2%	0.5%	411	5.5
Course offerings	24.4%	33.3%	29.5%	9.9%	2.4%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	414	5.7
Course scheduling	23.8%	29.7%	29.7%	11.9%	3.4%	1.0%	0.2%	0.2%	411	5.5
Variety of courses offered	21.0%	27.7%	31.1%	14.1%	3.2%	0.0%	0.2%	2.7%	405	5.3
Use of technology for instruction (e.g., computers, internet)	18.9%	18.9%	26.6%	17.7%	8.2%	1.7%	0.5%	7.5%	402	4.8
Overall rating of academic programs/educational support services	21.6%	35.1%	30.2%	10.6%	1.7%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	407	5.6

Chart 1: Preparation and Educational Experiences
Skills and Personal Growth

This survey allowed SPC to obtain relevant information from the best source available – their alumni – in order for the College to determine what it is doing successfully in the areas of services offered and development of skills/personal growth. Responses from the alumni indicated satisfaction with their SPC experiences. High ratings were given to the College's contribution to preparation for continuing education and for employment. Scoring low were areas of services, such as: job placement, specialized academic support services, student activities, and food services. The findings support the belief that St. Petersburg College is accomplishing its goals as presented in the College's mission statement. In the opinion of its alumni, SPC is providing quality education to its students.

A second purpose of this survey was to develop an instrument the Office of Institutional Effectiveness could use on a regular basis with SPC long-term alumni. It appears the items used on this survey were valid. However, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness should review the survey to determine

if some items could be eliminated to encourage more alumni responses. Historically, the shorter the survey the more likely individuals respond. Also, the survey should be reviewed with program directors to make certain the information requested best meets programmatic needs.

The number of undelivered surveys suggests that the Alumni office should be contacted to provide more accurate addresses than those in the FETPIP file housed in the Office of Institutional Research since this file was developed the year following graduation (1998-1999). All address corrections received from this survey were forwarded to the Alumni Office. Additionally, consideration should be given to surveying alumni 2 to 3 years after graduation to increase the response rate. Finally, the survey should be incorporated into a scannable form to minimize the time required to record responses and analyze the data.

If you wish to read the entire report, please contact your Provost or the Institutional Research Office for a copy.

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