2004-05 EMPLOYER SURVEY RESULTS
A RESEARCH BRIEF

Research Briefs

The dissemination of relevant information is a critical component of the performance improvement process. Research briefs are one mechanism used by St. Petersburg College (SPC) for this purpose. Research Briefs are short publications prepared by the Department of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) that are intended to provide relevant important information regarding a variety of College-related topics. These topics include, but are not limited to, student achievement, state accountability measures, institutional survey results, student enrollment, and faculty/adjunct compensation.

Introduction

As in previous years, SPC has conducted an Employer Survey designed to measure employer satisfaction with SPC graduates. Specifically, the Employer Survey was designed to gain insight into an employer's perceptions of the quality of hired SPC graduates, and identify an employer's willingness to support various college activities such as student training or placement.

Respondents of the Employer Survey have included graduates from Associate in Science/Associate in Applied Science (AS/AAS) and certificate programs. In Fall 2002, SPC began offering baccalaureate degrees (Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Applied Science). These technical programs focus on preparing students to enhance their skills, knowledge, reach higher levels of income, and increase personal/professional growth. Since Summer 2003, Bachelor degree graduates are included in the follow-up process.

Data Collection

The Recent Alumni Survey was administered to 2004-05 SPC graduates. Graduates are asked to provide the name and address of their employer and to allow SPC to contact their employer. The Employer Survey was then sent to the SPC graduate employers whose field was related to the graduate's area of study.

The survey includes questions relating to the employer's perception of their employees' (recent SPC graduate) ability in key general education competencies and foundational skill areas. Additional questions include the employee's major job responsibilities, employee wage information; willingness of the employer to hire another SPC graduate; and any additional skills or areas of knowledge that the employer would recommend. The last section on the survey is a list of areas for potential involvement by the employer.

Employer surveys were sent out to two hundred and eighty-seven employers. There were 119 surveys returned for a response rate of 41.5%. This included responses from 14 employers of graduates from the Bachelor's degree programs. In the preceding year, 110 of the 220 employers who were surveyed responded for a response rate of 50.0%.

Results

All ten key general education competencies and foundational skill areas had a mean score of 6 or higher on a 7-point Likert scale (7 indicates excellent). This response scale also included a Not Applicable (NA) rating. Overall, the percentage of employers responding to the identified skill items ranged between 76.5% and 89.9%. Other notable survey results include:

- Ninety-one percent (91.6%) of the employers responding indicated they would hire another SPC graduate.
- The majority of employers responding (91.0%) indicated their employees earned $9.00 or more per hour.
- Employers responding expressed interest in participating in two of the College's employment activities: 51.3% were interested in assisting in job placement of graduates, and 49.6% expressed a willingness to provide input about education/training needs for their workforce.

Employer responses to key general education competencies and foundational skill areas were compared to last year's Employer Survey of 2003-2004 SPC graduates. Table 1 displays a breakdown of each skill area by year for the lower division technical programs (AS/AAS, Certificate Programs). The table includes the number of responses and the mean of those responses for each year as well as the mean difference between the two years. The mean score of the skills for the lower division technical programs ranged from -0.1 to 0.2 with seven of the ten skill areas indicating an increase in this year's Employer Survey.

Table 1
Employer Survey Response for Lower Division (AS/AAS, Certificate Programs)

Competencies and Foundation Skills	2003-04 Graduates		2004-05 Graduates		
	N	Mean	N	Mean	Difference
Possesses necessary reading skills	94	6.5	105	6.6	0.1
Uses written communication skills effectively	95	6.3	105	6.2	-0.1
Uses oral communication skills effectively	92	6.2	105	6.2	0.0
Possesses effective computer skills (e.g. computing, word proc.)	91	6.2	103	6.3	0.1
Possesses necessary mathematics skills	86	6.1	100	6.3	0.2
Exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management	93	6.1	105	6.3	0.2
Chooses ethical courses of action	93	6.4	104	6.5	0.1
Participates as a team player	94	6.3	105	6.4	0.1
Works with individuals from diverse backgrounds	94	6.4	104	6.3	-0.1
Acquires, interprets and uses information effectively	93	6.2	104	6.3	0.1

Table 2 displays a breakdown of each skill area by year for the upper division programs (BS/BAS). The table includes the number of responses and the mean of those responses for each year as well as the mean difference between the two years. The mean score of the skills for the upper division technical programs ranged from -0.6 to 0.0 with eight of the skill areas indicating a decrease in this

year's Employer Survey. While the majority of mean differences were negative, all ratings exceeded the College's long accepted criteria of five on a seven point scale.

Table 2
Employer Survey Response for Upper Division Programs (BS/BAS)

Competencies and Foundation Skills	2003-04 Graduates		2004-05 Graduates		
	N	Mean	N	Mean	Difference
Possesses necessary reading skills	15	6.5	14	6.5	0.0
Uses written communication skills effectively	15	6.1	14	6.1	0.0
Uses oral communication skills effectively	15	6.3	14	6.0	-0.3
Possesses effective computer skills (e.g. computing, word proc.)	15	6.7	14	6.2	-0.5
Possesses necessary mathematics skills	15	6.6	13	6.1	-0.5
Exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management	15	6.5	14	6.1	-0.4
Chooses ethical courses of action	15	6.7	14	6.2	-0.5
Participates as a team player	15	6.8	14	6.2	-0.6
Works with individuals from diverse backgrounds	15	6.6	14	6.4	-0.2
Acquires, interprets and uses information effectively	15	6.5	14	6.1	-0.4

Overall, The Employer Survey results were very favorable. Employers indicated very high levels of satisfaction with SPC graduates' key general education competencies and foundational skill areas. Mean responses were 6.0 or greater in all skill areas for both upper and lower division programs. *Possesses necessary reading skills* was rated the highest skill in both degree areas. Employers have also consistently rated graduates *very high* when asked if the graduate *exhibited adequate educational preparation to perform their job*.

Ninety percent (91.6%) of employers of 2004-2005 graduates stated they would hire another SPC graduate. This represents a slight decrease (2.0%) from the previous years' rating of 93.6%. Employers of graduates from both years expressed the willingness to support the College's employment activities.

At the end of the survey, employers have the opportunity to provide additional comments. Analysis of these qualitative comments presented four main strengths possessed by SPC graduates: positive attitude (professionalism mentioned most frequently), very knowledgeable, good communication skills, and excellent problem solving skills.

Conclusion
Employers have consistently indicated high levels of satisfaction with SPC programs and training over the past few administrations of the Employer Survey. The survey outcomes indicate that AS/AAS degree, BS/BAS degree, and certificate programs are achieving their intended objective of preparing students to enhance their skills, knowledge, and increase personal/professional growth.