Institutional Research and Effectiveness Evaluation
A Research Brief

Research Briefs

Research Briefs are short publications prepared by the Department of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) that are intended to provide relevant information which assists in the performance improvement process used by St. Petersburg College (SPC). Research Brief topics include, but are not limited to, student achievement, state accountability measures, institutional survey results, student enrollment, and faculty/adjunct compensation.

Introduction

The purpose of this research brief is to report on the results of an evaluation of the Department of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE). The mission of the IRE Department is "to measure performance in support of the College's mission and goals by providing accurate and timely information to promote continuous improvement." As a result, an 18-question, web-based survey was developed to measure frequency of use and satisfaction with the IRE products and services. The primary consumers of IRE information are SPC faculty and staff. A link to the survey was sent in a college-wide email to these individuals announcing the distribution of the new 2007-2008 Fact Book on January 22, 2008.

Responses

Eighteen individuals responded to the IRE Evaluation Survey. Respondents were asked "What is your primary role at SPC?" Of the eighteen responses, two selected Cabinet, two selected Administrators, two selected Dean/Program Directors, seven selected Faculty, and five selected the Other category. The Other category included coordinator, staff, academic advisor, staff assistant, and instructional assistant. None of the respondents selected the Student option.

Results

The survey questions addressed the following IRE products and services: the website, the SPC Fact Book, Research Briefs, the Management Information Systems Advisor Taskforce (MISAFOR) minutes, and requests for data.

Institutional Research Website

Survey respondents were asked whether they had "used the IR website prior to receiving the survey" and how often they had "accessed Institutional Research website during the previous year." Fifty-six percent (55.6%) of the survey respondents had used the website prior to receiving the survey. Of those, 60.0% used the website only one time and 40.0% used the website at least monthly as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Website Use

Have you used the Institutional Research Website prior to receiving this survey?		
	N	%
Yes	10	55.6%
No	8	44.4%
Total	18	100.0%

Table 2
Frequency of Website Use

How often have you accessed the Institutional website during the previous year?		
	N	%
At least weekly	0	0.0%
At least monthly	4	40.0%
Only one time	6	60.0%
Never	0	0.0%
Total	7	100.0%

In terms of accessibility, 20.0% found the website structure very easy in terms of the ability to access information, and 60.0% found the website somewhat easy. The remaining two responses to the website accessibility item were somewhat difficult and very difficult as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Website Accessibility

How would you rate the website structure in terms of your ability to access the information that you need?		
	N	%
Very Easy	2	20.0%
Somewhat easy	6	60.0%
Somewhat difficult	1	10.0%
Very difficult	1	10.0%
Total	10	100.0%

SPC Fact Book
Only 39.0% of the survey respondents used this year's SPC Fact Book to acquire information as shown in Table 3. Of those, 57.1% used the SPC Fact Book only one time during the previous year, 28.6% at least monthly, and 14.3 % at least weekly.

Table 4
Fact Book Use

Did you use this year's SPC Fact Book to acquire information?		
	N	%
Yes	7	39.0%
No	11	61.0%
Total	18	100.0%

Table 5
Frequency of Fact Book Use

How often have you used the SPC Fact Book during the previous year?		
	N	%
At least weekly	1	14.3%
At least monthly	2	28.6%
Only one time	4	57.1%
Never	0	0.0%
Total	7	100.0%

In terms of which Fact Book section was most useful, the Student Headcount and Student Academics sections were selected by 71.4% of the survey respondents followed by Student Registration with 42.9% and Outcome Indicators and Personnel both at

28.6% as shown in Table 6. The graphs and tables were very easy or somewhat easy to use for 6 of the 7 individuals who responded.

Table 6
Fact Book Usefulness

Which sections of the SPC Fact Book do you find the MOST useful? (select all that apply)		
	N	%
Student Headcount	5	71.4%
Student Registration	3	42.9%
Student Academics	5	71.4%
Outcome Indicators	2	28.6%
Facilities	0	0.0%
Finance	0	0.0%
Personnel	2	28.6%
Other	1	14.3%
Total	18	100.0%

Table 7
Fact Book Appearance

Please rate the appearance of graphs and tables in the SPC Fact Book in terms of the ability to understand the data.		
	N	%
Very Easy	3	43.0%
Somewhat easy	3	43.0%
Somewhat difficult	0	0.0%
Very difficult	1	14.0%
Total	7	100.0%

Research Briefs

The Research Briefs cover a variety of topics related to the needs of the college. They often compare trends across time and are aimed at assisting the performance improvement process at the college. Research Briefs were accessed and read only one time by 22.2% of the survey respondents as shown in Table 8. In comparing the two index models for accessing the research briefs, most of the respondents (75.0%) found both the Topic and Chronological index models a useful way to access the Research Briefs.

Table 8
Research Brief Use

Have you accessed any of the Research Briefs on the Institutional Research Website during the previous year?		
	N	%
Yes	4	22.2%
No	14	77.8%
Total	18	100.0%

Table 9
Frequency of Research Brief Use

How often have you accessed the Research Briefs during the previous year?		
	N	%
At least weekly	0	0.0%
At least monthly	0	0.0%
Only one time	4	100.0%
Never	0	0.0%
Total	4	100.0%

Management Information Systems Advisor Taskforce (MISATFOR) Minutes

The Management Information Systems Advisor Taskforce contains representatives from each of the community colleges. Their purpose is to assure useful, consistent and accurate data collection while at the same time working to reduce the reporting burden to the colleges. Only two survey respondents were "familiar with MISATFOR" and only one had "accessed the MISATFOR minutes from the IR website during the previous year."

Requests for Data

Thirty-three percent of the respondents had "contacted the Institutional Research office for information or data during the previous year." Of those, all had been provided the requested information and all rated the Institutional Research Office staff with either a 3 or 4 on a four-point scale with 1 being not knowledgeable and 4 very knowledgeable.

Table 10
Research Staff

Please rate the knowledge of the Institutional Research Staff.		
	N	%
4 Very knowledgeable	2	33.0%
3	4	67.0%
2	0	0.0%
1 Not knowledgeable	0	0.0%
Total	6	100.0%

Conclusion

It is difficult to draw conclusions from this survey instrument due to the low number of overall responses (18). The IRE Department will work to increase the response rate for the next administration of this survey by improving the method of distribution and the design of the survey.

However, even with the low number of responses, there were some responses that would indicate a need for further investigation. A few of the survey respondents found difficulty navigating the website. Since the website is a primary means of disseminating information, consumer accessibility is an important concern for IRE. An increased focus on educating the consumer about the website and its available information will be a goal for this upcoming year.

Initial findings indicate the majority of Fact Book users sought information from the student sections. Since a large amount of time and resources are invested in the development of the Fact Book, an in-depth evaluation will be conducted this year on the content, presentation, and usability of the Fact Book.

Additionally, there were products and services not addressed in this survey. Future evaluations will seek feedback on Institutional Survey Reports, the Educational Outcomes Assessment website, and satisfaction with the services provided by the IRE department.

It is the goal of IRE to maintain and model a culture of continuous improvement. In order to meet this expectation next year's evaluation will use multiple measures including, but not limited to surveys, focus groups, and outcome assessments.