

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.” One instrument used to provide feedback from stakeholders is the IRE survey. The prior year's survey had a low response rate. In order to increase the response rate this year, the survey was redesigned and a new survey process was implemented.

This year's survey was intended to both obtain information from and provide information to the respondents. The survey was administered via the commercial on-line survey tool Zoomerang®. This tool enabled a branching option, whereby respondents could be directed to either an informational comment or additional questions based on their response. For example, respondents were asked “How often have you used the Fact Book to access information?” If they responded ‘never’ they were sent to a brief explanation of what the Fact Book is and how to access it. If they responded ‘rarely’, ‘occasionally’, or ‘frequently’, they were directed to a series of questions related to their use and satisfaction with the Fact Book. This branching model was used for each of the products and services provided by IRE. When respondents completed the survey, the final page directed them to the IRE website where there were links to the products and services provided by IRE.

The changes to the survey process included adding several points of contact with the targeted respondents. This new system was administered from January 26, 2009 to February 18, 2009. A written invitation to participate in the survey was sent to members of the Board of Trustees and President's Cabinet when they received a hard copy of the 2007-08 Fact Book. A college wide email notice of the Fact Book release included a link to the survey. An email was sent with a link to the survey to all Program Directors. A link to the survey was sent in a college-wide email, and an invitation to participate in the survey was published in two issues of the *Blue and White*, the electronic faculty and staff bulletin released weekly.

Responses

There were 85 responses to this year's IRE survey, an improvement from the 18 responses in the prior year. Respondents included administrative, professional, or managerial personnel (A&P); career service personnel; Deans/ Program Directors; Faculty; and President's Cabinet Members. There were no Board Member respondents and one respondent did not indicate a membership to any of the categories. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Which category best describes your role at the college?

	Number	Percent
Administrative, professional, or managerial personnel	19	22.4%
Career service personnel	21	24.7%
Dean/ Program Director	13	15.3%
Faculty	25	29.4%
President's Cabinet Member	6	7.1%
Not reported	1	1.2%
Total	85	100.0%

Results

Institutional Research and Effectiveness Website

The Institutional Research and Effectiveness website provides access to IRE products and services. Seventy-two percent of the (71.8%) of the respondents had been to the IRE website. The frequency of use is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

How often have you accessed the Department of IRE website?

	Number	Percent
Frequently	5	5.9%
Occasionally	32	37.6%
Rarely	24	28.2%
Never	24	28.2%
Total	85	100.0%

SPC Fact Book

The majority of respondents indicated they had at sometime used the SPC Fact Book, as shown in Table 3. All of the respondents from the President's Cabinet Member category had used the Fact Book occasionally. The majority of respondents categorized as

Deans/ Program Directors, and A&P used the Fact Book, with only 7.6% and 21.0%, respectively, indicating they had never used it. Details are shown in Table 4.

Table 3

How often have you used the Fact Book to access information?

	Number	Percent
Frequently	3	3.5%
Occasionally	34	40.0%
Rarely	21	24.7%
Never	27	31.8%
Total	85	100.0%

Table 4

How often have you used the Fact Book to access information?

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Administrative, professional, or managerial personnel	5%	52.6%	21.0%	21.0%
Career service personnel	0.0%	23.8%	19.0%	57.1%
Dean/ Program Director	16.6%	30.7%	46.1%	7.6%
Faculty	0.0%	32%	28%	40.0%
President's Cabinet Member	0.0%	100%	0.0%	0.0%

The twenty-seven (31.8%) respondents who indicated they had never used the Fact Book were directed to an informational page which explained: "The annual Fact Book provides information about the college. It was designed to be used as a reference for documenting data to support academic and administrative decisions. It also functions as a handbook for faculty wishing to gain a college-wide perspective. Topics include a college history, a description of the service area, and data related to the College's student body, academics, personnel, financial positions, facilities and outcomes indicators. Data are provided for multiple years with supporting graphs and charts." Those respondents were then directed to continue the survey, but were not administered the questions relating to satisfaction with the Fact Book.

The respondents who selected, frequently, occasionally, or rarely were asked a series of Likert scale questions to assist in the assessment of satisfaction with the Fact Book. The respondents were satisfied with the Fact Book, as shown by the details in Table 5. In the area of Timeliness the Fact Book had a mean score of 4.1, easy to understand: 4.2, easy to find: 4.2 and helpful had a mean score of 4.1 on a five point scale.

Table 5
Fact Book Satisfaction

	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
The Fact Book was timely.	57	1	5	4.12	.85
The information in the Fact Book was easy to understand.	57	1	5	4.18	.87
The information in the Fact Book was easy to find.	57	1	5	4.16	.90
The Fact Book was helpful.	57	1	5	4.09	.99

Respondents were also asked about the content of the Fact Book. According to respondents, the areas most useful were: Student Enrollment (77.1%), Outcomes/Indicators (54.3%), Student Registration (42.1%), and Student Academics (40.3%). Details regarding each area's usefulness can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6
What sections of the Fact Book were most useful to you?

	Number	Percent
Student Enrollment	44	77.1%
Outcome/ Indicators	31	54.3%
Student Registration	24	42.1%
Student Academics	23	40.3%
Pinellas County Profile	15	26.3%
College History	13	22.8%
Personnel	13	22.8%
Finance	6	10.5%
Facilities	3	5.2%

Note: Total is greater than 100% because respondents were able to select all that apply.

Research Briefs

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 by less than half (47.0%) of the survey respondents as shown in Table 7.

Table 7.

How often have you accessed the Research Briefs through the IRE website?

	Number	Percent
Frequently	1	1.2%
Occasionally	15	17.6%
Rarely	24	28.2%
Never	45	52.9%
Total	85	100.0%

Respondents' level of satisfaction with the research briefs had mean scores between 3.8 and 4.0 on a five point scale.

Table 8

Research Brief Satisfaction

	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
The Research Briefs were easy to locate.	39	1	5	3.79	.95
The Research Briefs were timely.	39	1	5	3.97	.87
The Research Briefs were easy to understand.	39	1	5	4.03	.87
The Research Briefs were helpful.	39	1	5	3.77	.99

Management Information Systems Advisor Taskforce (MISATFOR) Minutes

The Management Information Systems Advisor Taskforce (MISATFOR) 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 four respondents (4.7%) indicated they had received or accessed the MISATFOR minutes. Of those, only three responded (3.5%) to the satisfaction questions related to MISATFOR. The questions stating "minutes were helpful" and "minutes were easy to understand" both had a mean of 3.3 rating with 5 being strongly agree. Details can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9
MISATFOR Satisfaction

	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
The MISATFOR minutes were easy to understand.	3	1	5	3.33	2.08
The MISATFOR minutes were helpful.	3	1	5	3.33	2.08

Institutional Survey Reports

Students are surveyed periodically at the college during their tenure at the College, and as recent alumni. Institutional Survey Reports include the results of the Entering Student Survey, Enrolled Student Survey, Graduating Student Survey, Recent Alumni Survey, Employer Survey, and Community College Survey of Student Engagement. When respondents were asked how often they access this information, half (50.5%) indicated they had at sometime accessed the Survey Reports, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10
How often have you accessed Institutional Survey Reports on the IRE website?

	Number	Percent
Frequently	4	4.7%
Occasionally	12	14.1%
Rarely	27	31.8%
Never	42	49.4%
Total	85	100.0%

Overall, the 42 respondents who provided their perception of the survey reports found them to be easy to locate, timely, easy to understand, and helpful. The details can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11
Survey Reports Satisfaction

	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
The Institutional Survey Reports were easy to locate.	42	1	5	3.76	.96
The Institutional Survey Reports were timely.	42	1	5	3.76	.90
The Institutional Survey Reports were easy to understand.	41	1	5	3.95	.89
The Institutional Survey Reports were helpful.	40	1	5	3.78	.95

Educational Outcomes Assessment Website

Educational Outcomes Assessment is a website with both public access and log-in capability. Completed program assessments, general education assessments, and program reviews are available at this website. Program directors can also log-in and use this site to update information, locate prior assessment data, and complete reports. Less than half (43.4%) indicated they had accessed the Educational Outcomes Assessment website. Frequency is shown in Table 12. Those respondents who do access the Educational Outcomes Assessment website represent all categories at the college as shown in Table 13.

Table 12
How often have you accessed the Educational Outcomes Assessment Website?

	Number	Percent
Frequently	9	10.6%
Occasionally	16	18.8%
Rarely	12	14.1%
Never	48	56.5%
Total	85	100.0%

Table 13

How often have you accessed the Educational Outcomes Assessment Website?

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Administrative, professional, or managerial personnel	21.1%	36.8%	21.1%	21.1%
Career service personnel	0.0%	95.2%	0.0%	4.8%
Dean/ Program Director	30.8%	15.4%	30.8%	23.1%
Faculty	0.0%	68.0%	16.0%	16.0%
President's Cabinet Member	10.6%	33.3%	50.0%	0.0%

Of those who had accessed the website, 36 respondents indicated they were satisfied with mean scores ranging from 4.0 to 4.1 on a scale of 5. Details are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Educational Outcomes Assessment Website

	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
The Educational Outcomes Assessment Website was easy to navigate.	36	1	5	4.06	.92
Reports on the Educational Outcomes Assessment Website were timely.	36	1	5	4.14	.87
The Educational Outcomes Assessment Website was easy to understand.	36	1	5	4.14	.90
The Educational Outcomes Assessment Website was helpful.	36	1	5	4.11	.95

Requests for Data

The majority (77.6%) of respondents had not previously requested data from IRE. Of the respondents who had requested data from IRE, the majority were in the category of A&P followed by Dean/ Program Directors. Within respondent groups, 42.1% of the A&P responding had requested data, half (50%) of the President's Cabinet Member

respondents, and thirty-one percent (30.7%) of the Dean/ Program Director respondents had requested data from IRE. Details are shown in Table 15.

Table 15

In the past year, have you requested data or information from the Department of Institutional Research and Effectiveness?

	Total	Yes	No
Administrative, professional, or managerial personnel	19	42.1%	57.8%
Career service personnel	21	4.7%	95.2%
Dean/ Program Director	13	30.7%	69.2%
Faculty	25	8.0%	92.0%
President's Cabinet Member	6	50%	50%
Total	85	22.4%	77.6%

Customer Satisfaction

The respondents who did request data completed five questions related to customer satisfaction. The responses were high with mean scores ranging from 4.0 to 4.1, as seen in the detail in Table 16.

Table 16

Customer Satisfaction

	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Courtesy and professionalism	18	1	5	4.11	1.45
Quality	18	1	5	4.11	1.45
Timeliness	18	1	5	4.11	1.57
Accuracy	17	1	5	4.12	1.50
Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction?	18	1	5	4.06	1.55

Additional Comments

Respondents had the opportunity to make additional comments at the end of the survey. The majority of comments were positive, such as:

- “The IRE staff has always been extremely helpful and responsive. We are fortunate to have this department at SPC”,
- “I am very pleased with the support from the IRE Department”;
- “The services are great. The reports I’ve read were very informative”.

There were also comments directed at the informative nature of the survey with included:

- “I wasn’t aware this information...was online”;
- “Thanks for this information and this survey. I think if this were a test that I would have failed miserably. I should be better informed. I will score better next year”.

Additionally, there were some specific constructive ideas related to the inclusion of a hyperlink in the table of contents of the Fact Book, and suggested topics for research briefs. During the IRE staff meeting, the comments were shared with all members of the IRE department.

Conclusion

Based in the results, this survey was effective in achieving the intended purpose of gathering information and providing information. The respondents received information about each of the products and services provided by IRE. The data indicated half or less than half of the respondents had not accessed the specified products and services in the past year. As a result of the informative nature of this survey design, many received information about the products or services they had not utilized. Those who had experienced IRE products or services generally found them to be helpful, timely, and easy to locate.

The survey response rate was also an improvement with 85 responses this year up from the 18 the prior year. Improved design and implementation methods for the survey will continue to be a focus as IRE aims to increase the response rate again next year.

The survey results will be used by IRE to assist in making improvements to the organization and content of the Fact Book, and the availability and timeliness of the research briefs and institutional survey reports.