

SPC FACT BOOK 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 SPC Fact Book is an annual document produced by IRE, and utilized in paper form and electronically by a variety of stakeholders at the colleges. The SPC Fact Book is published annually, and includes tables and charts based on state and internal data. The SPC Fact Book serves as a resource for students, faculty, staff, and leadership. Last year, the Fact Book was thoroughly reviewed and revised to ensure a consistent format. Tables, charts, and narratives were adjusted to follow a specific uniform style. The purpose of this evaluation is to review the current format, clarify the purpose of Fact Book, and gather recommendations for future versions of the Fact Book.

Method

In order to obtain perspectives from a variety of Fact Book users, a multiple method approach was used. The IRE staff completed an internal document review; conducted targeted interviews with select members of senior leadership; solicited feedback from key college stakeholders (President's Cabinet, Faculty Senate, and the Institutional Effectiveness Team); and conducted a focus group. The focus group consisted of administrators identified as high volume data users.

Document Review

Participants in the document review held on June 4, 2009 were a research specialist, two assessment coordinators, and the director of IRE. Reviewed documents included IRE's evaluation survey, and Fact Books from community colleges, universities, and the state, as well as other national resources. The participants reviewed online and hard copy versions of Fact Books, and common data sets. In addition to the samples, the group also reviewed the IRE data request log which lists all the data requests the department has received over the last year. Frequently, the information requested was already contained within the SPC Fact Book, but the requester needed some guidance in identifying the location within the document. In other cases, the requests involved more current data or specific data than what was available in the SPC Fact Book.

Targeted Interviews

Targeted interviews were conducted individually with two campus provosts, one of which is responsible for the college workforce programs, and the Senior Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs. The participants were interviewed by an assessment coordinator, and written notes were taken to capture the content of the meeting. The interviews followed a general script which included four opened-ended questions:

- How do you use the Fact Book? How is it used in your office?
- How easy is it for you to find information in the Fact Book?
- What about the Fact Book do you like or dislike?
- If you could add anything you wanted to the Fact Book, what would you like to include?

Solicited Feedback

The Institutional Effectiveness (IE) team was asked to provide feedback about the SPC Fact Book using similar questions. A follow-up email was sent on June 22, 2009. Earl Fratus, President of the Faculty Senate, solicited feedback about the SPC Fact Book from the Faculty Senate members on July 2, 2009. The President's Cabinet was also asked for feedback, and sent a follow-up email on July 22, 2009.

Some members of the IE team shared the SPC Fact Book questions with their departments. Six responses were received as a result of the IE team feedback. The President's Cabinet provided two responses, but none were provided by the faculty senate.

Focus Groups

The focus group met on July 20, 2009 for an hour. It was composed of program administrators, deans, directors, research coordinators, enrollment personnel, and lead instructors. The group was initially reminded of the overall purpose of the evaluation and guided with similar open-ended questions. There was a facilitator and co-facilitator who documented the meeting. Participants' comments were also posted during the meeting as they were intended to clarify responses and encourage group brainstorming. The meeting was summarized and participants were given the opportunity to add any additional comments or feedback at the conclusion of the meeting.

The results from each individual activity were summarized and reviewed by a second evaluator. The individual summaries were then reviewed and information was divided into three categories: how the Fact Book is used; the current format of the Fact Book; and recommendations or desires for the future.

Summary of Results

Results are provided below for each of the methods used in the evaluation.

Document Review

Responses to the question "What sections of the Fact Book were most useful to you?" indicated that student enrollment was the most useful section, followed by outcome/indicators, student registration, and student academics. Comments from the IRE evaluation survey which related to the Fact Book included:

- Adding lower division transfer statistics for individual programs;
- Adding more demographics, such as race, gender, age for both those applying and actual enrollees (required by accreditation);
- Alternating colored lines in tables to facilitate reading across the screen;
- Presenting general college facts more effectively, i.e., on the college website and in printed materials such as the Fact Book; and
- Including ratio of administration positions to full time faculty positions such as the number of administrators making over \$80,000 vs. faculty making over \$80,000; the ratio of administrators to faculty of our college vs. other colleges; the ratio of full and part time faculty positions to direct support staff (word processing, secretary, etc); and the number of people paid at the \$30,000 rate with increases at \$10,000 intervals through \$500,000.

Based on the review of the documents, the participants identified various potential improvements, which are listed below.

- Providing a table of contents with links;
- Including tabs;
- Adding headings;
- Including section breaks;
- Providing narrative to support and explain tables;
- Potential for the inclusion of demographic maps;
- Providing additional visual aids to support data;
- Revising tables to include fewer variables/factors/allowing tables to focus on one or two elements (i.e. remove number count and only have percent); and
- Including a profile (snapshot) of SPC by campus, student (age, race/ethnicity, gender, upper division/lower division, developmental education, financial aid, credit/non-credit, retention, and disability information), faculty (adjuncts/fulltime, race/ethnicity, age, education, and length of stay-tenure).

Document Reviewers also discussed potential formats which could be used on-line. These included the option of having searchable tables.

Targeted Interviews

Each of the individuals interviewed had worked with the Fact Book, were familiar with the format and content of the Fact Book, and stated that they found it comfortable to use. However, some individuals noted that the tables may be difficult to use by someone less familiar with the organizational structure of the document. It was also stated that it is difficult to find

information within the online version. Locating the right table would be easier with a table of contents, or some sort of searchable data resource. Labels in the document would also help the user find the right table.

Each of the three participants saw value in the Fact Book as a resource for SPC users. There were concerns about the timeliness of the document and the redundancy of beginning-of-fall and end-of-fall data. Some suggested that the FTE distribution could be broken down in more ways with a strong focus on measures that are of current concern such as gender. Some participants indicated that while the history section had been too long before, the recent reduction had made it too short.

The idea of targeting specific measures was raised at multiple interviews. Participants identified a need for retention measures; longitudinal growth data (specifically in Tables 25 and 26); SSH by campus; placement information; snapshot of indicators; profile information for both campus specific and college wide; 'dashboard' indicators to include, productivity, enrollment, funding to instruction and faculty; student outcomes, annual performance of AS degree; funding information, such as how funds are used for example in fund 12; and demographic information.

In an ideal world, the participants would like to see the Fact Book have a shorter timeline so the information included could be timely. Also, incorporating this data into a Business Intelligence model to impact decision making, would be desirable for the information found in the Fact Book.

Solicited Feedback

Many respondents to the solicited feedback stated that the current SPC Fact Book was easy to use, and liked both the online and the paper format of the document.

They also liked various elements of the SPC Fact Book including: layout and type of information provided; usefulness of the information; and having all the information accessible from one place. Some criticisms were that the information provided is geared toward state requirements rather than to the individual campus; that more campus information was required to support and develop effective student life programs; and that the history section should be a little longer.

Suggested changes included: providing more information on Internet students such as the number of students getting their degree entirely online; number of states or countries where students taking online classes reside; number of programs offered entirely on-line; and number of individual classes offered on-line; providing statistics regarding career placement of graduates and current student information.

Focus Groups

Focus group participants generally liked the table of contents, use of color in the document, the demographic information, the instate/out of state information, the fulltime/part-time information, and the gender information.

Suggested changes to the SPC Fact Book format included: adding links to the tables, displaying more grid lines, adding an index, color coding the years, better table lines, less broad categories, highlights, and summary of findings.

Suggested changes to the data included: a breakdown of information by CIP code, adding retention and financial aid information by program, high school transfer information, including the number of four-year students transferring to graduate school, information on incoming freshman, information on online students, up-to-date placement information, and information on corporate training, lifelong learning, and continuing education.

Focus group participants would like to see more details on how the data in the tables is defined and collected, and stated that the FTE and SSH information was very repetitive with too many breakdowns of the same information.

Conclusions

The Fact Book evaluation indicated that the overall satisfaction with the current Fact Book is very high. Both the online and hard copy versions of the Fact Book were identified as useful formats. The Fact Book serves a variety of uses, and some of those identified by the participants are listed below.

- Examining college trends;
- Locating historical information for presentations;
- Sharing information with community and staff members;
- Preparing presentations for new students;
- Finding statistics to promote the college;
- Identifying enrollment management statistics (race, gender, etc);
- Responding to student questions about the college;
- Providing demographic data for accreditation reports;
- Providing information to satisfy accreditation requirements; and
- As one place to get uniform/consistent data that can be used by multiple users.

Suggested revisions to the SPC Fact Book were summarized into two sections: revisions associated with the format of the document, and revisions associated with the content.

Format

Accessibility of the information in the SPC Fact Book was a recurring theme in the evaluation. Suggested changes included adding 'hot' links to the table of contents in the online format, and adding section breaks with tabs to the hard copy. Participants also suggested adding a table list (with 'hot' links) to the beginning of the document to assist in quickly locating information. Other format related changes included color

coding the years, and improving the lines and shading in the tables. Participants also requested the history section be expanded after the large reduction in size from last year.

Content

In the area of content, participants suggested adding some campus profile information for students (SSH, credit/non-credit, upper division/lower division, demographics, developmental education, financial aid, and disability information) and employees (adjuncts/fulltime, demographics, and length of stay-tenure). Participants also requested specific student group information for incoming students, online students, and non-credit students (corporate training, lifelong learning, and continuing education). Student success information was requested as well and included such information as career placement of graduates and four-year student transfers to graduate schools. Content additions also included the addition of performance measures such as retention, productivity, enrollment projections, finance, and student outcomes. Another common suggestion was adding summary and findings-related information.

One general recurring theme was the timeliness of the document. Participants identified a need for more current data to be available. There were also some suggestions that the data within the SPC Fact Book was repetitive.

Proposed ideas and changes as a result of this evaluation are preliminary and have not yet been examined for feasibility. The SPC Fact Book evaluation was intended to identify what may be accomplished without consideration given to current resources, staff, or time needed to implement these ideas.