

RESEARCH BRIEF

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STUDENT RETENTION STUDY

INTRODUCTION

In order to learn more about students who attend St. Petersburg Junior College (SPJC) and who do not complete their programs, the Office of Institutional Research examined the demographics of students who attend one session but fail to return the next session. Specifically, the demographics of the cohort of degree seeking students who attended the Fall 1995 session and (1) who were not enrolled in the Spring 1996 session (as of early February 1996), (2) who did not graduate in December 1995, and (3) who were neither on probation nor on "hold" were compared to the demographics of all degree seeking students who attended Fall 1995 (based on end-of-term data). The table on the next page describes those data.

FINDINGS

The distribution of students attending at the end of Fall 1995 shows that 38.1% identified Clearwater as their home campus, 48.4% identified St. Petersburg/Gibbs as their home campus, and 13.5% identified the Tarpon Springs Center as their home campus. This was very similar to the distribution by home campus of the cohort of students who attended in the Fall but did not return in the Spring session. The distribution of non-returning students by home campus was Clearwater 36.7%, St. Petersburg/Gibbs 49.0%, and Tarpon Springs Center 14.4%. Thus, the distribution of non-returning students across home campuses appeared consistent with the distribution of all degree seeking students.

The same was true with respect to gender and ethnicity. For Fall 1995, 39.2% of degree seeking students were male and 60.8% of degree seeking students were female. Forty percent (40.0%) of the non-returning students were male and 60.0% were female. The distribution of all Fall 1995 degree seekers by ethnicity was: white, 84.4%; black, 7.1%; Hispanic, 4.0%; Asian, 3.4%; and American Indian, 1.1%. The distribution of non-returning students was: white, 85.4%; black, 6.9%; Hispanic, 3.7%; Asian, 2.7%; and American Indian, 1.3%.

There was little difference in the percentage of students in the 24 years or less age group in both the group of all students (48.0%) and the cohort of non-returning students (48.7%). There were some differences, although not large, in the students in the 25-34 age group (all students, 27.4%; cohort, 31.1%) and in the 35 and older age groups (all students, 24.6%; cohort, 20.1%). A comparison of the percentages showed that more students in the 25-34 year age group of the cohort failed to return than in the all student group. The reverse was true for students over 35 years of age. The table shows that for each age classification the percentage of students in the cohort who failed to return was less than in the all student group.

An examination of the distribution of all students and the non-returning cohort students was difficult since the non-returning cohort excluded students enrolled in Fall 1995 who had not identified a degree seeking program code. (Note that in the non-returning cohort 16 students were identified as non-degree seeking as the result of program code changes.) Recalculating the percentages excluding the students in the Fall 1995 all student group who identified themselves as attending for "Other Personal Objectives" showed that 82.3% were seeking the A.A. degree and 17.7% were enrolled in Postsecondary Vocational programs (A. S. degree/vocational certificates). The corresponding numbers in the non-returning cohort were 84.1% for A. A. degree programs and 15.9% for A.S. degree/certificate programs (excluding the 16 students). Thus, the percentage of A. A. degree students in the non-returning cohort was larger than the percentage in the all student group and the reverse was true for A. S. degree/certificate programs.

There was a difference between the group of all students and the non-returning student group based on attendance status. More part-time students enrolled in Fall 1995 failed to return in Spring 1996 than students enrolled full-time in Fall 1995. Almost twenty-four percent (23.7%) of the Fall 1995 degree seeking students were classified as full-time enrolled in twelve or more credits; 76.3% were classified part-time taking less than twelve credits. In the non-returning cohort, 15.0% were classified full-time and 85.0% were classified part-time. Thus, it appears that attendance status may influence the students decision not to return the next semester. Additional information concerning actual course enrollments (that is, courses taken) and time of attendance (day vs. evening) for the part-time students who failed to return might assist the college develop retention strategies for this group.

CONCLUSION

In order to learn more about SPJC students who attend one session but fail to return the next session, student demographics were examined. Specifically, the demographics of the cohort of degree seeking students who attended the Fall 1995 session and (1) who were not enrolled in the Spring 1996 session, (2) who did not graduate in December 1995, and (3) who were neither on probation nor on "hold" were compared all degree seeking students who attended Fall 1995.

The distribution of the non-returning student cohort across home campuses appeared consistent with the distribution of all degree seeking students. The same was true with respect to gender and ethnicity.

There were some differences, although not large, by program of study and by age group. When the percentages were compared, it appeared that more students in the 25-34 year age group failed to return than in the all student group. The reverse was true for students over 35 years of age. There was little difference in the percentage of students in the 24 years or less age group between the cohort of non-returning students and the group of all students. Fewer students in vocational programs fail to return than in the university transfer programs.

There was a difference between the group of all students and the cohort of non-returning students based on attendance status. More part-time students enrolled in Fall 1995 failed to return in Spring 1996 than students enrolled full-time in Fall 1995.

**Profile of Fall 1995 Degree Seeking Students vs.
Cohort of Spring 1996 Non-Returning Degree Seeking Students**

All Degree Students Attending Fall 1995

| | CLEARWATER | | ST. PETE/G | | TARPON CENTER | | TOTAL | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| <u>PROGRAM</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Advanced & Professional | 5,596 | 67.6% | 7,225 | 68.6% | 2,117 | 72.1% | 14,938 | 68.7% |
| Postsecondary Vocational | 1,232 | 14.9% | 1,599 | 15.2% | 377 | 12.8% | 3,209 | 14.8% |
| Other Personal Objectives | 1,456 | 17.6% | 1,703 | 16.2% | 443 | 15.1% | 3,602 | 16.6% |
| Total by Program | 8,284 | | 10,527 | | 2,937 | | 21,749 | |
| Percent by Campus | 38.1% | | 48.4% | | 13.5% | | 100.0% | |
| <u>TYPE OF ATTENDANCE</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Full-time | 2,021 | 24.4% | 2,467 | 23.4% | 676 | 23.0% | 5,164 | 23.7% |
| Part-time | 6,263 | 75.6% | 8,060 | 76.6% | 2,261 | 77.0% | 16,585 | 76.3% |
| <u>GENDER</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 3,455 | 41.7% | 3,987 | 37.9% | 1,080 | 36.8% | 8,523 | 39.2% |
| Female | 4,829 | 58.3% | 6,540 | 62.1% | 1,857 | 63.2% | 13,226 | 60.8% |
| <u>RACE</u> | | | | | | | | |
| White | 7,226 | 87.2% | 8,392 | 79.7% | 2,739 | 93.3% | 18,357 | 84.4% |
| Black | 365 | 4.4% | 1,142 | 10.8% | 43 | 1.5% | 1,550 | 7.1% |
| American Indian | 80 | 1.0% | 128 | 1.2% | 27 | 0.9% | 236 | 1.1% |
| Asian | 258 | 3.1% | 433 | 4.1% | 40 | 1.4% | 731 | 3.4% |
| Hispanic | 355 | 4.3% | 432 | 4.1% | 88 | 3.0% | 875 | 4.0% |
| <u>AGE</u> | | | | | | | | |
| 15-19 | 1,683 | 20.3% | 2,017 | 19.2% | 738 | 25.1% | 4,438 | 20.4% |
| 20-24 | 2,404 | 29.0% | 2,799 | 26.6% | 794 | 27.0% | 5,997 | 27.6% |
| 25-29 | 1,296 | 15.6% | 1,691 | 16.1% | 369 | 12.6% | 3,356 | 15.4% |
| 30-34 | 992 | 12.0% | 1,321 | 12.5% | 302 | 10.3% | 2,615 | 12.0% |
| 35-39 | 695 | 8.4% | 1,062 | 10.1% | 261 | 8.9% | 2,018 | 9.3% |
| 40-44 | 509 | 6.1% | 748 | 7.1% | 190 | 6.5% | 1,447 | 6.7% |
| 45-49 | 327 | 3.9% | 432 | 4.1% | 142 | 4.8% | 902 | 4.1% |
| 50-54 | 175 | 2.1% | 211 | 2.0% | 66 | 2.2% | 452 | 2.1% |
| 55-59 | 77 | 0.9% | 102 | 1.0% | 31 | 1.1% | 210 | 1.0% |
| 60 and over | 123 | 1.5% | 140 | 1.3% | 43 | 1.5% | 306 | 1.4% |
| Not known | 3 | 0.0% | 4 | 0.0% | 1 | 0.0% | 8 | 0.0% |

Cohort of Students Not Returning Spring 1996

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| <u>PROGRAM</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Advanced & Professional | 1,255 | 81.5% | 1,733 | 84.3% | 527 | 87.4% | 3,515 | 83.7% |
| Postsecondary Vocational | 282 | 18.3% | 310 | 15.1% | 75 | 12.4% | 667 | 15.9% |
| Other Personal Objectives | 3 | 0.2% | 12 | 0.6% | 1 | 0.2% | 16 | 0.4% |
| Total by Program | 1,540 | | 2,055 | | 603 | | 4,198 | |
| Percent by Campus | 36.7% | | 49.0% | | 14.4% | | 100.0% | |
| <u>TYPE OF ATTENDANCE</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Full-time | 239 | 15.5% | 303 | 14.7% | 89 | 14.8% | 631 | 15.0% |
| Part-time | 1,301 | 84.5% | 1,752 | 85.3% | 514 | 85.2% | 3,567 | 85.0% |
| <u>GENDER</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 678 | 44.0% | 790 | 38.4% | 213 | 35.3% | 1,681 | 40.0% |
| Female | 862 | 56.0% | 1,265 | 61.6% | 390 | 64.7% | 2,517 | 60.0% |
| <u>RACE</u> | | | | | | | | |
| White | 1,391 | 90.3% | 1,640 | 79.8% | 554 | 91.9% | 3,585 | 85.4% |
| Black | 45 | 2.9% | 239 | 11.6% | 7 | 1.2% | 291 | 6.9% |
| American Indian | 15 | 1.0% | 29 | 1.4% | 9 | 1.5% | 53 | 1.3% |
| Asian | 35 | 2.3% | 69 | 3.4% | 8 | 1.3% | 112 | 2.7% |
| Hispanic | 54 | 3.5% | 78 | 3.8% | 25 | 4.1% | 157 | 3.7% |
| <u>AGE</u> | | | | | | | | |
| 15-19 | 259 | 16.8% | 329 | 16.0% | 119 | 19.7% | 707 | 16.8% |
| 20-24 | 513 | 33.3% | 641 | 31.2% | 186 | 30.8% | 1,340 | 31.9% |
| 25-29 | 302 | 19.6% | 378 | 18.4% | 94 | 15.6% | 774 | 18.4% |
| 30-34 | 177 | 11.5% | 295 | 14.4% | 62 | 10.3% | 534 | 12.7% |
| 35-39 | 124 | 8.1% | 191 | 9.3% | 54 | 9.0% | 369 | 8.8% |
| 40-44 | 81 | 5.3% | 119 | 5.8% | 44 | 7.3% | 244 | 5.8% |
| 45-49 | 52 | 3.4% | 62 | 3.0% | 25 | 4.1% | 139 | 3.3% |
| 50-54 | 20 | 1.3% | 27 | 1.3% | 13 | 2.2% | 60 | 1.4% |
| 55-59 | 6 | 0.4% | 6 | 0.3% | 3 | 0.5% | 15 | 0.4% |
| 60 and over | 6 | 0.4% | 7 | 0.3% | 3 | 0.5% | 16 | 0.4% |
| Not known | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |