

EMPLOYER SURVEY OF 1996-97 GRADUATES COMPARED TO 1995-96 GRADUATES

Employer satisfaction with St. Petersburg Junior College (SPJC) graduates is a critical component of the strategic planning process at the institution. Accordingly, the Institutional Assessment Group developed an Employer Survey designed to measure employer satisfaction with graduates' preparation for work. Specifically, the purposes of the survey were:

- to attain insight into employer perceptions regarding technical and performance skills of SPJC graduates,
- to gain information to supplement college data for Performance Based Incentive Funding, and
- to identify employers who might be available to participate with the college program activities or to provide opportunities for student training or placement.

Working students who graduated in the 1996-97 reporting year and who completed the Recent Alumni Survey identified the employers who would receive the survey. Employers were mailed an Employer Survey form if the students: (1) indicated that their work was related to their studies, (2) agreed that their employer could be contacted, and (3) gave the name and address of the employer. One hundred fifty businesses were contacted. There were 134 surveys returned for a response rate of 89.3%.

The findings of the Employer Survey of 1996-97 graduates are summarized below:

- Employers indicated high levels of satisfaction with SPJC graduates' technical and performance skills. The following skills received a mean score of 6 or higher on a 7-point scale where 7 equals excellent:
 - 1) exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management
 - 2) chooses ethical courses of action,
 - 3) participates as a team player,
 - 4) works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds,
 - 5) possesses the ability to gain rapport with clients.

For these skills, the percentage of employers responding with a rate of 6 or higher ranged between 73% and 80%.

The remaining skill areas received a mean score of 5.7 to 5.9. These areas were:

- (1) uses written and oral communication skills effectively,
- (2) possesses necessary mathematics skills,
- (3) uses critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills,
- (4) identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources,
- (5) acquires, interprets and uses information effectively, and
- (6) uses technology effectively.

For these skills, the percentage of employers responding with a rate of 5 or higher ranged between 83.6% and 92.5%.

- Almost all employers (95%) indicated they would hire another SPJC graduate. No employer indicated they would not hire another SPJC graduate.
- In order for the College to qualify for Performance Based Incentive Funding, its graduates must either be working in a field related to their SPJC degree program or earning \$7.50 per hour. The majority (98.4%) of SPJC graduates were reported by employers as earning \$7.50 per hour or more.
- Seventy percent or more of the employers of 1996-97 graduates expressed a willingness to participate on two college activities (provide input educational/training for their workforce 71.3%; job placement of graduates 70.0%). A willingness to accept a student in a co-op internship was expressed by 65.7% of the employers.

Employer responses with respect to technical and performance skills of 1996-97 SPJC graduates were compared to responses of employers who were questioned about 1995-96 SPJC graduates. In the preceding year, 133 of the 152 employers who were surveyed responded for a response rate of 87.5%.

Employers were asked about the performance in the same skill areas each year. Table 1 shows each skill and the mean of the responses and the percentage of employers responding 5, 6, or 7 on the 7-point scale. Each skill area has shown improvement except one, participates as a team player, this skill scored a mean of 6.0 in both 1995-96 and 1996-97. The three skills that demonstrated the most improvement in 1996-97 compared to 1995-96 for a rating of 6 or higher were:

- Acquires, interprets and uses information effectively (19.4%)
(72% 1996-97; 52.6% 1995-96)
- Uses Technology effectively (14.5%)
(70.1% 1996-97; 55.6% 1995-96)
- Uses Critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making (13.5%)
(63.9% 1996-97; 50.4% 1995-96)

Table 1.

1996-97 Employer Responses Compared to 1995-96 Employer Responses

Competencies and Foundation Skills	1995-1996					1996-1997				
	N	Mean	Employer Rating			N	Mean	Employer Rating		
			5	6	7			5	6	7
Uses written and oral communications skills effectively	133	5.7	26.2%	30.1%	30.1%	133	5.8	21.7%	38.3%	30.1%
Possesses necessary mathematics skills	131	5.7	27.5%	26.7%	29.0%	131	5.8	24.4%	35.9%	25.9%
Uses critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills	133	5.4	27.8%	28.7%	21.8%	133	5.8	23.3%	33.8%	30.1%
Exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management	133	5.7	21.1%	24.8%	37.5%	132	6.0	13.7%	28.0%	44.7%
Chooses ethical courses of action	133	6.0	40.6%	30.1%	21.8%	133	6.2	12.8%	27.8%	51.9%
Identifies, organizes, plans and allocates resources	133	5.4	27.8%	30.8%	21.1%	134	5.7	22.5%	29.1%	32.2%
Participates as a team player	133	6.0	17.3%	27.8%	45.1%	131	6.0	13.7%	26.7%	48.9%
Works with individuals from diverse backgrounds	133	6.0	22.6%	27.1%	42.9%	132	6.1	14.4%	28.8%	46.9%
Acquires, interprets and uses information effectively	133	5.5	29.3%	24.8%	27.8%	132	5.9	18.2%	37.9%	34.1%
Possesses the ability to gain rapport with clients	133	5.8	24.1%	28.6%	36.2%	132	6.0	15.9%	31.8%	41.7%
Uses technology effectively	124	5.6	25.9%	27.4%	28.2%	127	5.9	19.7%	37.0%	33.1%

Other improvements were shown for 1996-97 graduates. Over ninety-three percent (93.9%) of the employers indicated they would hire another 1995-96 SPJC graduate compared to 94.7% of the employers of 1996-97 graduates. Over ninety-five percent (95.2%) of the employers responded that their 1995-96 SPJC graduates were earning an hourly wage of \$7.50 or more compared to 98.4% of the employers of 1996-97 graduates. On the other hand, fewer employers expressed a willingness to participate in college activities (see Table 2.).

Table 2.

Employers Who Indicated a Willingness to Participate in College Activities

College Activity	1995-96		1996-97	
	Total Respondents	Willingness to Participate	Total Respondents	Willingness to Participate
Serve on Advisory Committee	107	56.1%	98	43.9%
Placement of student in co-op internship	106	75.5%	102	65.7%
Job placement of graduates	109	83.5%	105	70.0%
Participation in job fairs/other community events	105	56.2%	95	47.4%
Provide input educational/training for their workforce	107	81.3%	101	71.3%

In conclusion, employers have indicated high levels of satisfaction with SPJC programs and training for some time. Results indicate that A.S. degree and Postsecondary Vocational Certificate programs are achieving their intended objective of preparing students for work.

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