

RESEARCH BRIEF

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EMPLOYER SURVEY FOR 1997-98 WORKING 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 1997-98 reporting year and who completed the Recent Alumni Survey identified the employers who would receive the Employer Survey form if they: (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. Two hundred eighty-seven businesses were contacted. There were 137 surveys returned for a response rate of 48.0%.

The findings of the Employer Survey of 1997-98 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) possesses necessary reading skills,
 - 2) participates as a team player,
 - 3) uses written communication skills effectively,
 - 4) works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds,
 - 5) chooses ethical courses of action, and
 - 6) uses oral communication skills effectively.

For these skills, the percentage of employers responding with a rate of 6 or higher ranged between 73.5% and 86.8%.

The remaining skill areas received a mean score of 5.6 to 5.9. These areas were:

- (1) acquires, interprets and uses information effectively,
- (2) exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management,
- (3) possesses necessary mathematics skills, and
- (4) possesses effective computer skills

For these skills, the percentage of employers responding with a rate of 5 or higher ranged between 69.6% and 87.6%.

- Almost all employers (96%) 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 (94%) of SPJC graduates were reported by employers as earning \$7.50 per hour or more.
- Seventy percent or more of the employers of 1997-98 graduates expressed a willingness to participate in two college activities (provide input educational/training for their workforce 79.8%; job placement of graduates 70.9%). A willingness to accept a student in a co-op internship was expressed by 67.6% of the employers.

Employer responses with respect to technical and performance skills of 1997-98 SPJC graduates were compared to responses of employers who were questioned about 1996-97 SPJC graduates. In the preceding year, 134 of the 150 employers who were surveyed responded for a response rate of 89.3%.

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 1996-97 and 1997-98. The two skills that demonstrated a slight improvement in 1997-98 compared to 1996-97 for a rating of 6 or higher were:

- Participates as a team player (2.7%)
(78.3% 1997-98; 75.6% 1996-97)
- Works with individuals from diverse backgrounds (.6%)
(76.3% 1997-98; 75.7% 1996-97)

Table 1.

1997-98 Employer Responses Compared to 1996-97 Employer Responses

Competencies and Foundation Skills	1996-97						1997-98			
	N	Mean	Employer Rating			N	Mean	Employer Rating		
			5	6	7			5	6	7
Possesses necessary reading skills	-	-	-	-	-	137	6.5	6.6%	25.5%	61.3%
Uses written communication skills effectively	-	-	-	-	-	137	6.2	13.1%	29.9%	47.4%
Uses oral communication skills effectively	-	-	-	-	-	132	6	15.2%	30.3%	43.2%
Possesses effective computer skills (e.g. computing, word proc.)	127	5.9	19.7%	37.0%	33.1%	135	5.6	20.7%	23.7%	25.2%
Possesses necessary mathematics skills	131	5.8	24.4%	35.9%	25.9%	136	5.8	19.1%	36.8%	25.7%
Exhibits an appropriate level of responsibility and self-management	132	6.0	13.7%	28.0%	44.7%	137	5.9	15.3%	28.5%	43.5%
Chooses ethical courses of action	133	6.2	12.8%	27.8%	51.9%	133	6.1	17.3%	28.6%	46.6%
Participates as a team player	131	6.0	13.7%	26.7%	48.9%	134	6.2	11.9%	26.1%	52.2%
Works with individuals from diverse backgrounds	132	6.1	14.4%	28.8%	46.9%	135	6.1	12.6%	25.9%	50.4%
Acquires, interprets and uses information effectively	132	5.9	18.2%	37.9%	34.1%	134	5.9	12.7%	30.6%	41.0%

Improvements are continually being shown for SPJC graduates. Over ninety-four percent (94.7%) of the employers indicated they would hire another 1996-97 SPJC graduate compared to 96.0% of the employers of 1997-98 graduates. Earnings of \$7.50 or more for 1997-98 graduates are consistent with the previous year graduates' of (98.4%). In addition, an increase in employer's willingness to participate in college activities was noticed (see Table 2.).

Table 2.

Employers Who Indicated a Willingness to Participate in College Activities

College Activity	1996-97		1997-98	
	Total Respondents	Willingness to Participate	Total Respondents	Willingness to Participate
Serve on Advisory Committee	98	43.9%	103	42.9%
Placement of student in co-op internship	102	65.7%	102	67.6%
Job placement of graduates	105	70.0%	103	70.9%
Participation in job fairs/other community events	95	47.4%	89	48.3%
Provide input educational/training for their workforce	101	71.3%	94	79.8%

In conclusion, employers have indicated moderate 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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