



## 2005-06 EMPLOYER SURVEY RESULTS A RESEARCH BRIEF

### Research Briefs

The dissemination of relevant information is a critical component of the performance improvement process. Research briefs are one mechanism used by St. Petersburg College (SPC) for this purpose. Research Briefs are short publications prepared by the Department of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE) that are intended to provide relevant important information regarding a variety of College-related topics. These topics include, but are not limited to, student achievement, state accountability measures, institutional survey results, student enrollment, and faculty/adjunct compensation.

### Introduction

As in previous years, SPC has conducted an Employer Survey designed to measure employer satisfaction with SPC graduates. Specifically, the Employer Survey was designed to gain insight into an employer's perceptions of the quality of hired SPC graduates, and identify an employer's willingness to support various college activities such as student training or placement.

The focus of the Employer Survey is to evaluate graduates from Associate in Science/Associate in Applied Science (AS/AAS) and certificate programs. In Fall 2002, SPC began offering baccalaureate degrees (Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Applied Science). These technical programs focus on preparing students to enhance their skills, knowledge, reach higher levels of income, and increase personal/professional growth. Since Summer 2003, Bachelor degree graduates are included in the follow-up process.

### Data Collection

The Recent Alumni Survey was administered to 2005-06 SPC graduates. Graduates were asked to provide the name and address of their employer and to allow SPC to contact their employer. The Employer Survey was then sent to employers of SPC graduates who were working in a field related to their education.

The survey includes questions relating to the employer's perception of their employee's (recent SPC graduate) aptitude in key general education competencies and foundational skill areas. Additional questions include the employee's major job responsibilities; employee wage information; willingness of the employer to hire another SPC graduate; and any additional skills or areas of knowledge that the employer would recommend. The last section of the survey contains a list of opportunities for employer involvement at SPC.

Employer surveys were sent out to one hundred and ninety-six employers. One hundred surveys were returned resulting in a response rate of 42.0%. This included responses from 64 employers of graduates from the Bachelor's degree programs. In the preceding year, 119 of the 287 employers who were surveyed responded for a response rate of 41.5%.

Prior to the survey administration period, enhancements were made to the employer survey items. Revisions were made to the general education competencies and foundational skills areas. These items were categorized into six major outcome/skill areas, the competency areas were revised, and twelve additional skill items were added to the survey. These enhancements were made to assist the College in determining if it is adequately meeting its academic goals in assuring student success in the workplace.

The employer survey included questions relating to the graduates' achievement in the following categories: communication, computational, technical, problem solving, people, and lifelong learning skills.

### Results

Overall, all twenty-five key general education competencies and foundational skill areas received mean scores between of 4.0 and 4.5 on a 5-point Likert scale (5 indicates excellent). This response scale also included a Not Applicable (NA) rating. Overall, the percentage of employers responding to the identified skill items ranged between 64.3% and 99.0%. Other notable survey results include:

- Ninety-six percent (96.0%) of the employers responding indicated they would hire another SPC graduate.
- Eighty-eight employers (62.50%) responding to the question regarding hourly compensation indicated their employees earned between \$15.00 and \$19.99 per hour. Of the five employers responding to the question regarding annual salary, all indicated their employees earned above \$30,000 per year.
- Employers responding expressed interest in participating in two of the College's employment activities: 38.0% expressed a willingness to provide opportunities for student co-op/internship placement, and 28.0% were interested in assisting in job placement of graduates.

Table 1 displays the number of overall responses for each general education outcome, the mean of the responses, and the percentage of the employers responding to a selection of 3, 4, or 5 on the 5-point scale response scale. Employers indicated high levels of satisfaction with SPC graduates' communication abilities, use of technology, problem solving skills, team work skills, and appreciation of lifelong learning.

The skill areas with the highest level of satisfaction, that is, those rated as "Excellent" were:

- (1) speaking, listening and reading (51.5% to 53.5%);
- (2) use of Email (53.1%);
- (3) participation as team player, working well with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and using ethical courses of action (61.6% to 66.0%); and
- (4) showing interest in career development, openness to new ideas, willingness to take on new responsibilities, and pursuing additional educational opportunities (51.0% to 57.0%).

The outcome with the lowest rating was in the category of using technology "Databases" (25.8%). All outcomes received mean scores between 4.0 and 4.5.



Table 1  
2005-06 Overall Employer Responses

2005-06 Employer Responses					
	Number	Mean	Employer Rating		
			3	4	5
<b>Communicate clearly and effectively with others through:</b>					
Speaking	99	4.3	20.2%	24.2%	53.5%
Listening	99	4.3	17.2%	30.3%	51.5%
Reading	94	4.4	14.3%	25.5%	55.1%
Writing	96	4.2	24.5%	24.5%	48.0%
<b>Use mathematical and computational skills:</b>					
Comfortable with mathematical calculations	85	4.2	21.4%	26.5%	37.8%
Uses computational skills appropriately	84	4.2	22.4%	22.4%	39.8%
Accurately interprets mathematical data	86	4.1	23.2%	25.3%	35.4%
<b>Use the following forms of technology:</b>					
E-mail	90	4.3	19.4%	18.4%	53.1%
Word Processing	88	4.3	20.4%	23.5%	44.9%
Spreadsheets	66	4.0	21.6%	16.5%	36.8%
Databases	66	4.0	20.6%	18.6%	25.8%
Internet Research	77	4.3	17.2%	15.2%	42.4%
<b>Think logically and critically to solve problems:</b>					
Gathers and assesses relevant information	99	4.2	23.0%	25.0%	48.0%
Inquires and interprets information	99	4.2	22.0%	26.0%	48.0%
Organizes and evaluates information	98	4.2	21.0%	25.0%	48.0%
Analyzes and explains information to others	98	4.1	23.0%	27.0%	44.0%
Uses information to solve problems	98	4.2	21.0%	29.0%	45.0%
<b>Work effectively with others in a variety of settings:</b>					
Participates as team player (e.g., groups projects)	100	4.5	13.0%	19.0%	66.0%
Works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds	98	4.5	12.1%	25.3%	61.6%
Uses ethical courses of action	98	4.5	12.0%	22.0%	62.0%
Demonstrates leadership skills	98	4.0	26.0%	27.0%	40.0%
<b>Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning:</b>					
Shows interest in career development	99	4.3	15.0%	29.0%	51.0%
Open to new ideas and challenges	99	4.4	14.0%	26.0%	57.0%
Willing to take on new responsibilities	99	4.4	12.0%	26.0%	57.0%
Pursues additional educational opportunities	97	4.2	18.0%	24.0%	49.0%

Table 2 displays a breakdown of each outcome for the lower division technical programs (AS/AAS, and Certificate Programs). The table includes the number of responses and the mean response for each outcome. Employers indicated high levels of satisfaction with graduates' general education outcomes. Twenty-three outcomes received mean scores between 4.0 and 4.6, while two outcomes received mean scores of a 3.9.

Table 2

*Employer Survey Response for Lower Division (AS/AAS, and Certificate Programs)*

<i>General Education Outcomes</i> (Five point rating scale with five being the highest)	<i>Item Ratings</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N/A*</i>
<i>Communicate clearly and effectively with others through:</i>				
Speaking	35	4.3	0.90	---
Listening	35	4.3	0.86	---
Reading	33	4.4	0.90	1
Writing	33	4.2	1.00	1
<i>Use mathematical and computational skills:</i>				
Comfortable with mathematical calculations	29	3.9	0.96	6
Uses computational skills appropriately	28	4.0	1.04	7
Accurately interprets mathematical data	28	3.9	1.04	7
<i>Use the following forms of technology:</i>				
E-mail	29	4.6	0.74	5
Word Processing	26	4.4	0.80	8
Spreadsheets	19	4.2	0.90	15
Databases	17	4.3	0.85	17
Internet Research	22	4.6	0.86	13
<i>Think logically and critically to solve problems</i>				
Gathers and assesses relevant information	35	4.2	0.96	1
Inquires and interprets information	35	4.2	0.94	1
Organizes and evaluates information	34	4.3	0.97	2
Analyzes and explains information to others	34	4.2	0.91	2
Uses information to solve problems	34	4.3	0.84	2
<i>Work effectively with others in a variety of settings:</i>				
Participates as team player (e.g., groups projects)	36	4.5	0.77	---
Works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds	35	4.5	0.78	1
Uses ethical courses of action	35	4.3	0.94	1
Demonstrates leadership skills	35	4.1	0.94	1

Note: The survey allowed employers to select N/A if a competency was 0 for an employee.

Table 2 (continued)

*Employer Survey Response for Lower Division (AS/AAS, and Certificate Programs)*

<i>General Education Outcomes</i> (Five point rating scale with five being the highest)	<i>Item Ratings</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N/A*</i>
	<i>Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning:</i>			
Shows interest in career development	36	4.4	0.96	---
Open to new ideas and challenges	36	4.3	0.96	---
Willing to take on new responsibilities	36	4.4	0.81	---
Pursues additional educational opportunities	35	4.3	0.90	1

Table 3 displays a breakdown of each outcome for the upper division programs (BS/BAS). The tables include the number of responses and the mean of those responses for each outcome. Employers indicated high levels of satisfaction with graduates' general education outcomes. Twenty-three outcomes received mean scores between 4.0 and 4.5, while two outcomes received mean scores of a 3.9.

Table 3

*Employer Survey Response for Upper Division Programs (BS/BAS)*

<i>General Education Outcomes</i> (Five point rating scale with five being the highest)	<i>Item Ratings</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N/A*</i>
<i>Communicate clearly and effectively with others through:</i>				
Speaking	64	4.3	0.90	---
Listening	64	4.3	0.76	---
Reading	61	4.4	0.78	3
Writing	63	4.2	0.84	1
<i>Use mathematical and computational skills:</i>				
Comfortable with mathematical calculations	56	4.3	0.82	7
Uses computational skills appropriately	56	4.3	0.82	7
Accurately interprets mathematical data	58	4.2	0.87	6
<i>Use the following forms of technology:</i>				
E-mail	61	4.2	0.89	3
Word Processing	62	4.2	0.87	2
Spreadsheets	47	3.9	0.97	16
Databases	49	3.9	0.95	14
Internet Research	55	4.1	0.94	9

Note: The survey allowed employers to select N/A if a competency was 0 for an employee.

Table 3 (continued)

*Employer Survey Response for Upper Division Programs (BS/BAS)*

<i>General Education Outcomes</i> (Five point rating scale with five being the highest)	<i>Item Ratings</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N/A*</i>
<i>Think logically and critically to solve problems</i>				
Gathers and assesses relevant information	64	4.2	0.87	---
Inquires and interprets information	64	4.2	0.87	---
Organizes and evaluates information	64	4.1	0.89	---
Analyzes and explains information to others	64	4.1	0.92	---
Uses information to solve problems	64	4.1	0.90	---
<i>Work effectively with others in a variety of settings:</i>				
Participates as team player (e.g., groups projects)	64	4.5	0.82	---
Works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds	63	4.5	0.67	---
Uses ethical courses of action	63	4.5	0.69	1
Demonstrates leadership skills	63	4.0	0.99	1
<i>Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning:</i>				
Shows interest in career development	63	4.2	0.87	1
Open to new ideas and challenges	63	4.4	0.78	1
Willing to take on new responsibilities	63	4.3	0.88	1
Pursues additional educational opportunities	62	4.1	0.98	2

At the end of the survey, employers have the opportunity to provide additional comments. Analysis of these qualitative comments presented several main strengths possessed by SPC graduates: professionalism, dedication, excellent work ethic, well prepared, team player, and self motivated.

### Conclusion

Based on the responses from the 100 participating employers, the survey results indicate employers are satisfied with the performance of recent graduates in the workplace. The ratings demonstrate that SPC's graduates are reasonably prepared as indicated by the above average ratings in the majority of skill areas.

In summary, the survey outcomes indicate that AS/AAS degree, BS/BAS degree, and certificate programs are achieving their intended objective of adequately preparing students for the workplace by enhancing their skills, knowledge, and increasing personal and professional growth.