

The Entering Student Survey

St. Petersburg College

2005-2006



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The Entering Student Survey (ESS) developed by St. Petersburg College is part of a comprehensive college-wide assessment program to ensure that the College delivers quality academic and support services to our students. The 2005-2006 iteration of the ESS was available to matriculating students only in an electronic format. Thirteen hundred and forty eight students completed the survey. The primary purpose of the ESS is to get a demographic picture of the students entering the College, discover what factors influence their decision to apply to the College, discern how they learned about the College, measure their perception of the importance of various academic and student support services and determine their satisfaction with a mixture of contact method used by the College. Surveys were completed by students who were applying to the College during academic year 2005-2006. However, not every student answered every question and some responses were not included for technical reasons. As a consequence, the number of responses (N) may vary from question to question.

The survey has five major sections:

- Section A Demographic and Academic Information of the Students
- Section B Factors Influencing Students' Decision to Apply
- Section C Sources and Media through which Students First Learned about the College
- Section D Rating the Importance of nineteen Offices and Student Support Services Areas
- Section E Effectiveness of Student Contacts

The ratings for Sections D are based on a 7-point scale with "Critical" (7) being the highest possible rating and "Unimportant" (1) the lowest.

The ratings for Section E are based on a 7-point scale with "Excellent" (7) being the highest rating and "Poor" (1) the lowest possible rating.

The remainder of this report is a summary of the survey data with commentary.

Section A - Demographic and Academic Information of the Students

The demographic profile and academic background of the 1348 respondents (N) to the “Entering Student Survey” are summarized in the following narrative, tables, and charts.

Fifty five percent of the respondents were younger than 25 years of age.

Sixty six percent of the respondents who disclosed their gender were female.

Sixty eight percent of the respondents were from Pinellas County, while an additional twenty six percent of the respondents identified other Florida counties as their place of residency. Six percent of our students’ residences were outside of Florida.

Forty six percent of the responding students stated that it had been more than five years since they graduated from high school.

Seventy three percent of the respondents listed their ethnicity as “White” while the second largest group, with nine percent of the total selected “Hispanic” as their ethnicity.

The single largest group of students identified there campus as eCampus while the second largest group of respondents identified St Petersburg/Gibbs as there home campus.

This year the most often stated reason for attending the College was to pursue an A.A with forty six percent of the respondents.

Fifty one percent of our respondents plan to attend the College full-time.

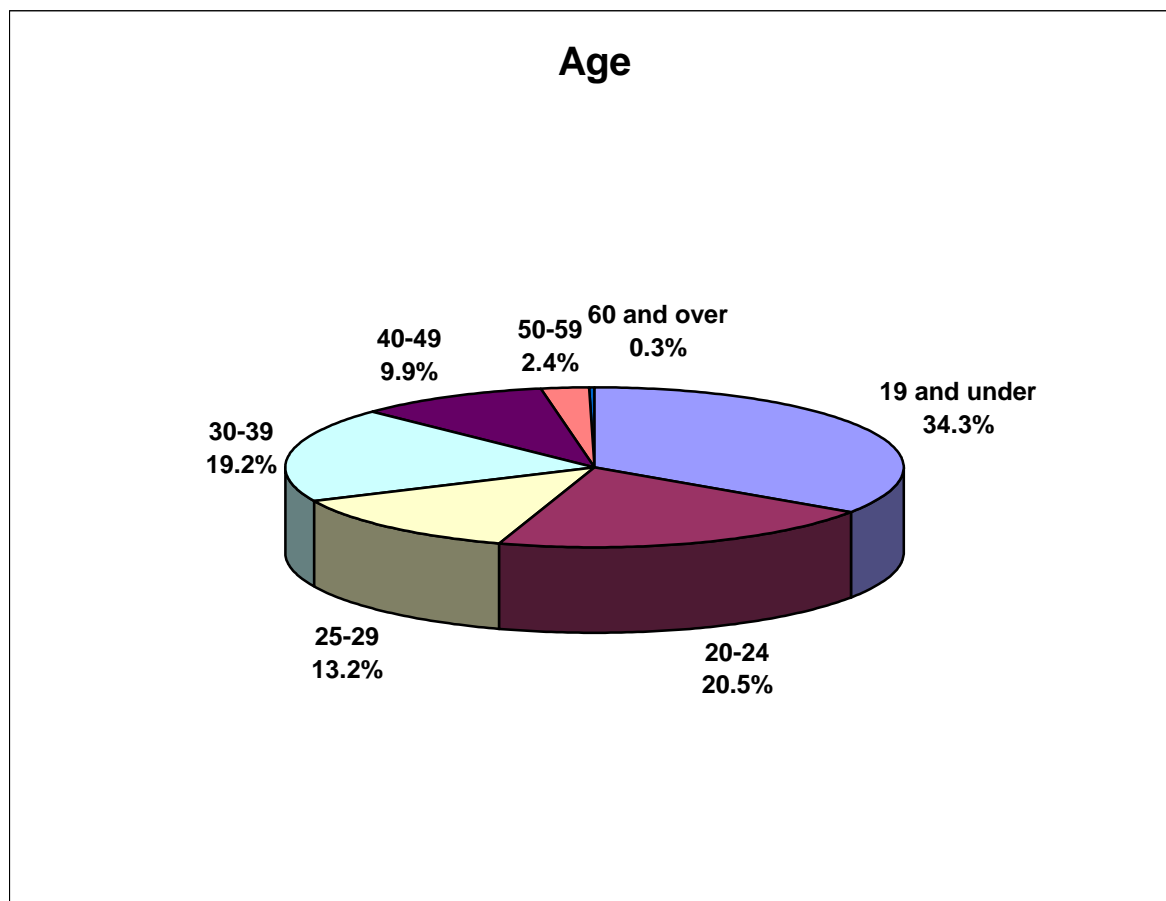
About fifty percent of our students plan to attend part-time, and about twenty five percent of our students actually prefer attending part-time. Leaving about twenty five percent that are part-time but would prefer being full-time. The primary reasons that prevented responding students from attending full-time are the following: “Job Responsibilities”, “Finances” and “Family Responsibilities”. Of this grouping, SPC can only significantly impact student “Finances” via increased scholarships and grants. There is not much the College can do to help with “Job Responsibilities” and “Family Responsibilities”.

Twenty three percent of our respondents already have an academic degree.

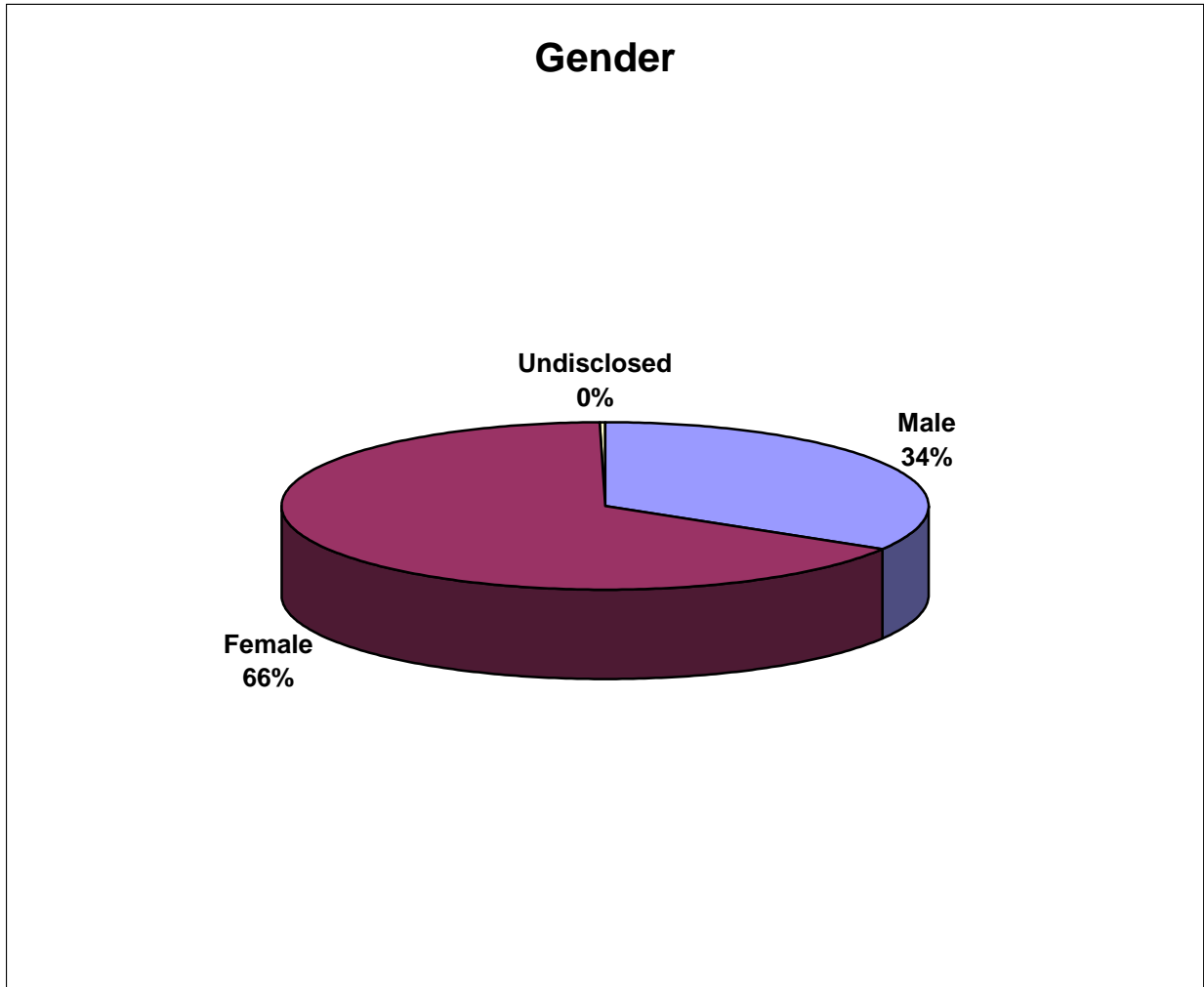
Eighty seven percent of our students plan to work while attending college and thirty two percent plan to work full-time or more.

Background/Demographic Information on Entering Students 2005/2006 Tables and Charts

Ages	Respondents	% of Total
19 and under	463	34.30%
20-24	277	20.50%
25-29	178	13.20%
30-39	259	19.20%
40-49	134	9.90%
50-59	33	2.40%
60 and over	4	0.30%

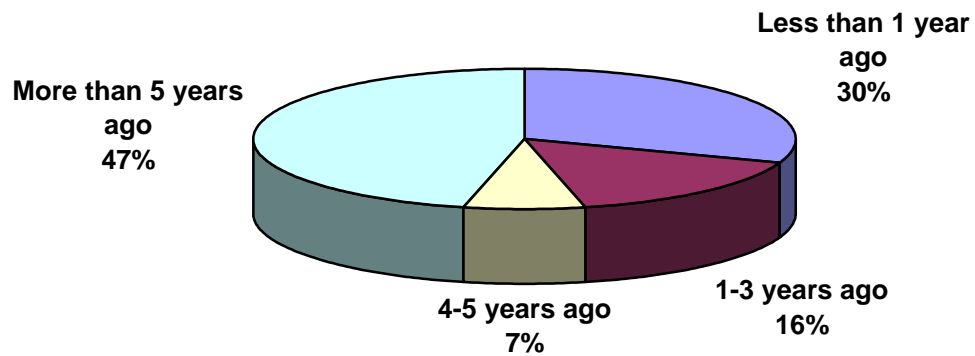


Gender	Respondents	% of Total
Male	452	33.53%
Female	893	66.25%
Undisclosed	3	0.22%



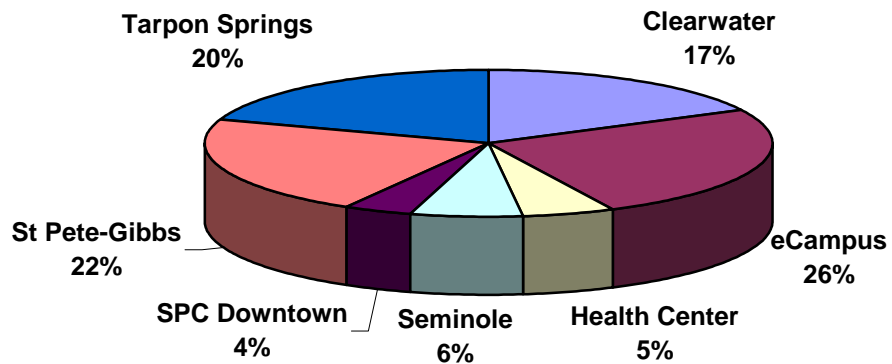
Time Since High School	Respondents	% of Total
Less than 1 year ago	411	30.50%
1-3 years ago	216	16.00%
4-5 years ago	96	7.10%
More than 5 years ago	625	46.40%

Time Since High School



Campus	Respondents	% of Total
Clearwater	235	17.40%
eCampus	341	25.30%
Health Center	73	5.40%
Seminole	86	6.40%
SPC Downtown	51	3.80%
St Pete-Gibbs	297	22.00%
Tarpon Springs	265	19.70%

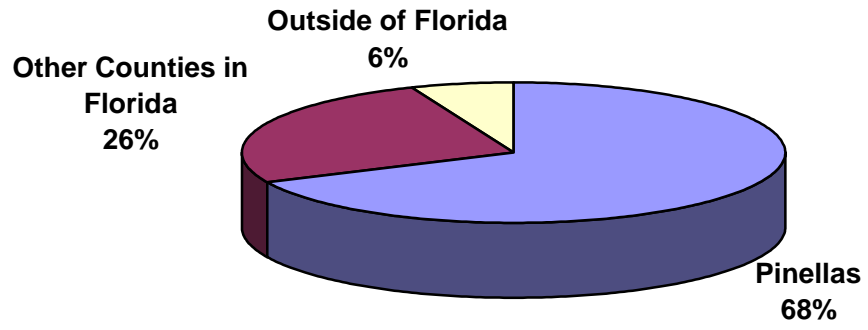
Campus



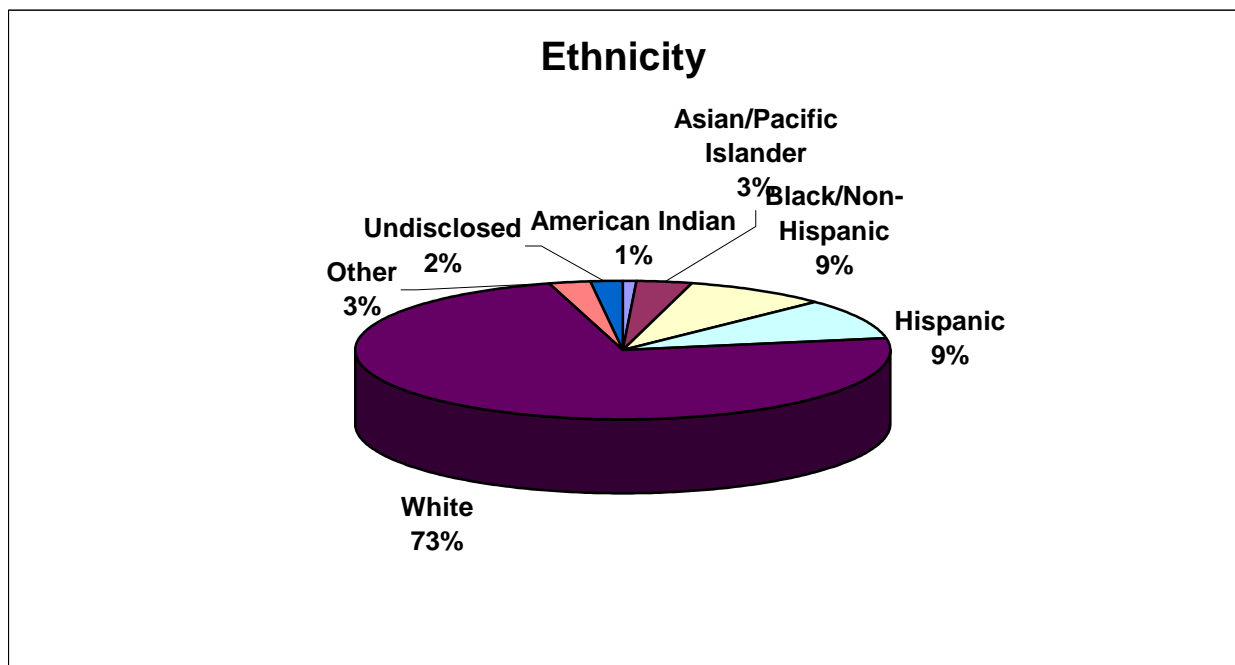
Top 50 Zip Codes

Zip Code	Respondents
34683	39
33702	34
33710	34
34689	33
33755	27
33713	26
33764	26
34684	26
34691	26
34677	25
33770	24
33756	22
34655	22
34695	21
33705	20
33712	20
33716	20
33781	20
34685	20
34698	20
34690	19
33709	16
33711	16
33760	16
33763	16
33771	16
33772	16
34653	16
33759	15
33774	15
33703	13
33714	13
33773	13
33761	12
34688	12
33765	11
33701	10
33707	10
33777	10
33782	10
34667	10
33556	9
33708	9
34668	9
32608	8
33778	8
34609	8
34652	8
33569	7
33626	7

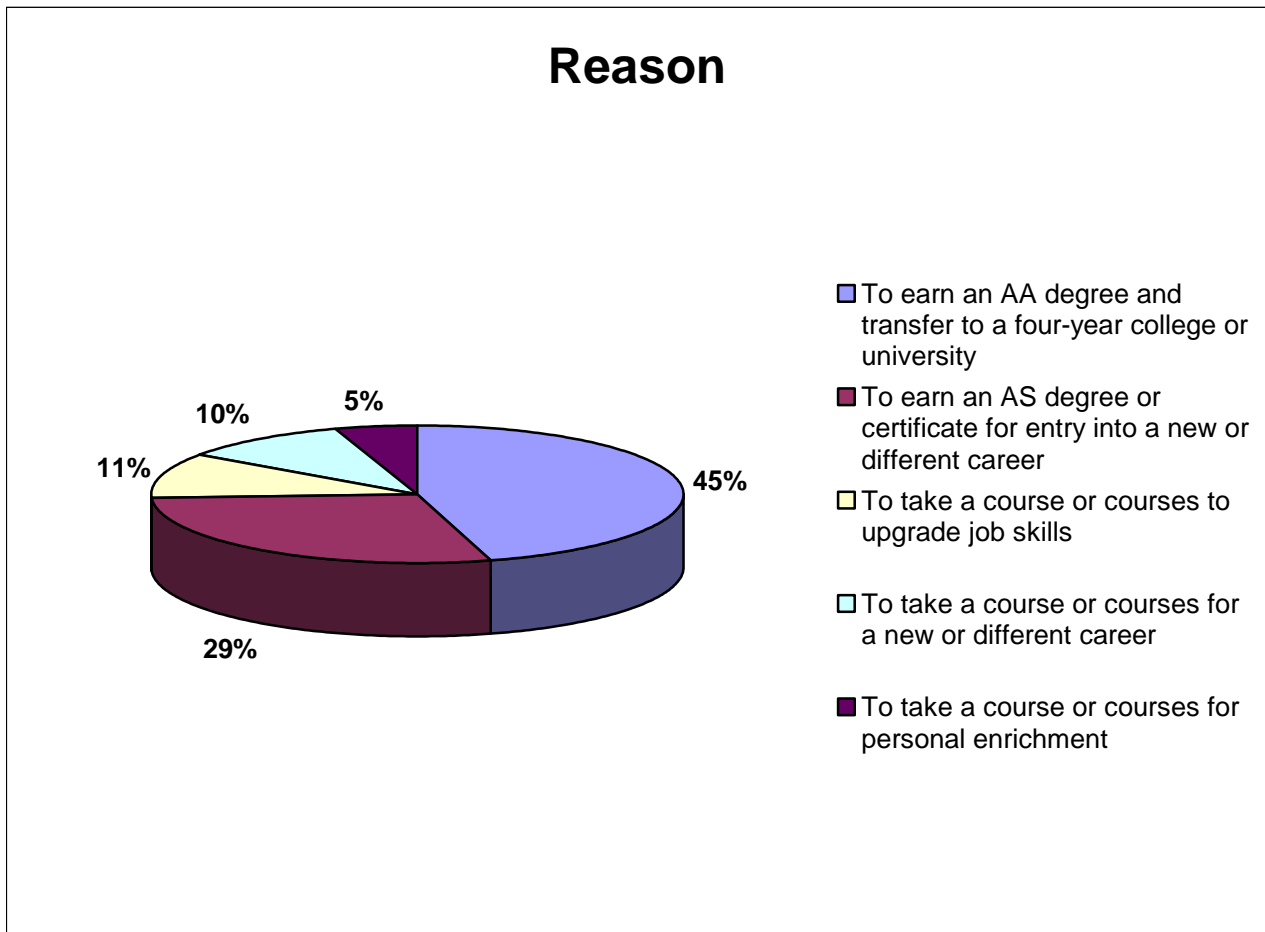
Summary Analysis of All Zip Codes



Ethnicity	Respondents	% of Total
Alaskan Native	0	0.00%
American Indian	11	0.80%
Asian Pacific	45	3.30%
Black/Non-Hispanic	116	8.60%
Hispanic	127	9.40%
White	990	73.40%
Other	34	2.50%
Undisclosed	25	1.90%

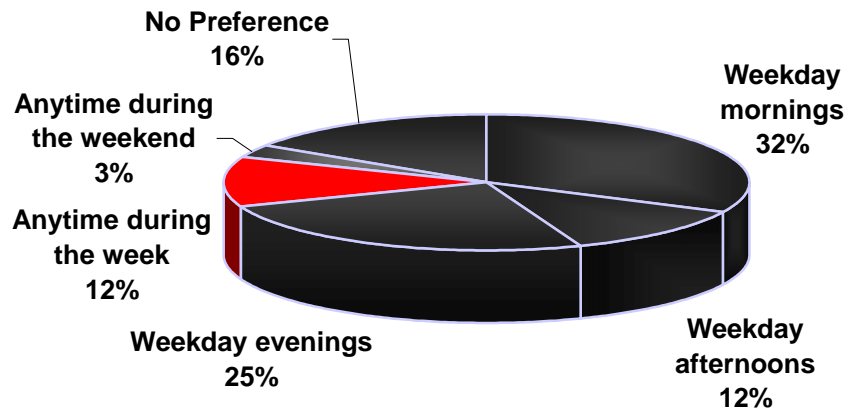


Reason for Enrolling at SPC	Respondents	% of Total
To earn an AA degree and transfer to a four-year college or university	596	45.60%
To earn an AS degree or certificate for entry into a new or different career	374	28.62%
To take a course or courses to upgrade job skills	139	10.64%
To take a course or courses for a new or different career	131	10.02%
To take a course or courses for personal enrichment	67	5.13%

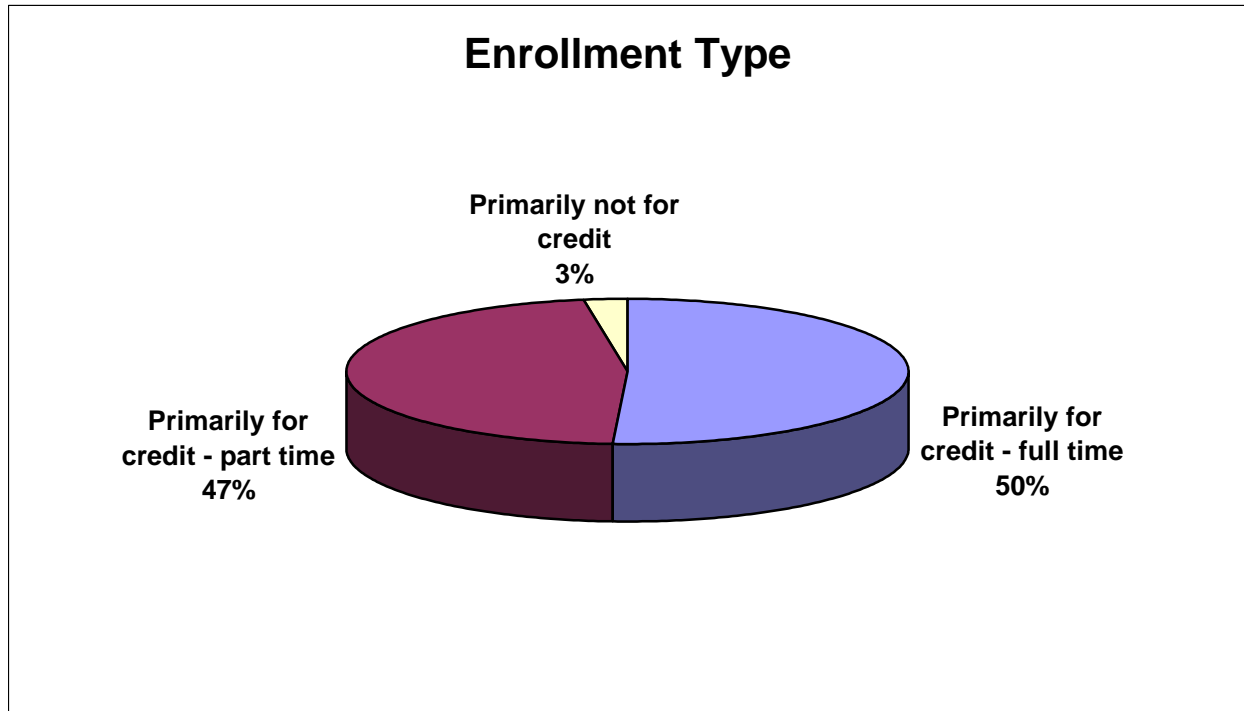


Time	Respondents	% of Total
Weekday mornings	435	32.30%
Weekday afternoons	160	11.90%
Weekday evenings	336	24.90%
Anytime during the week	161	11.90%
Anytime during the weekend	43	3.20%
No Preference	213	15.80%

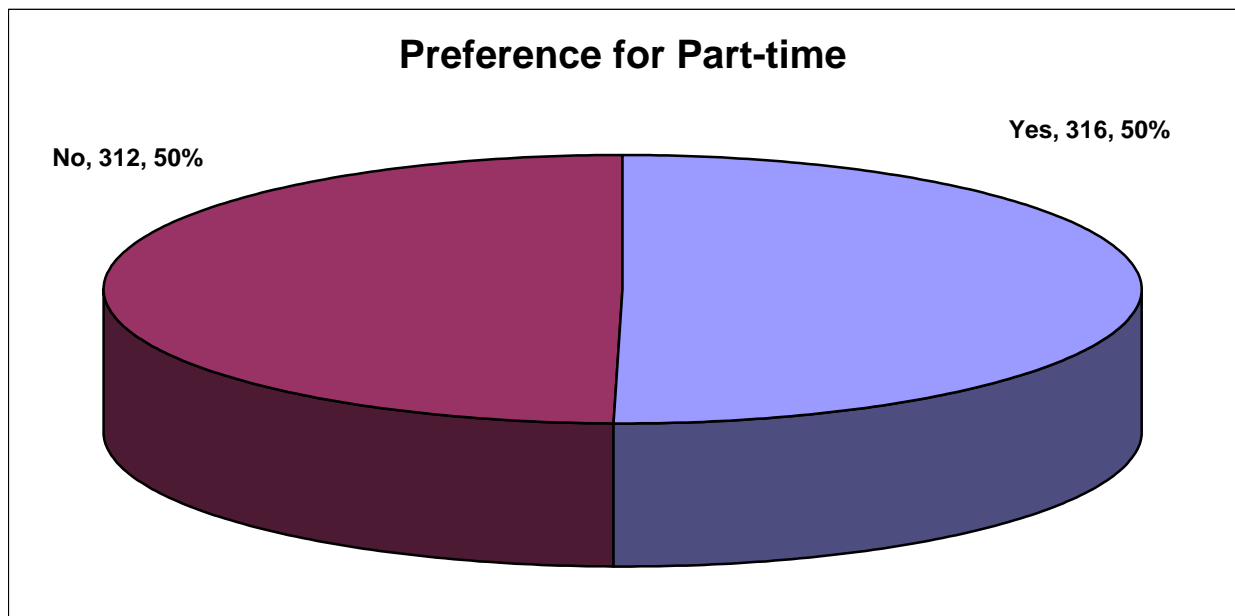
Time Preference



Enrollment Type	Respondents	% of Total
Primarily for credit - full-time	686	50.90%
Primarily for credit - part-time	628	46.60%
Primarily not for credit	34	2.50%

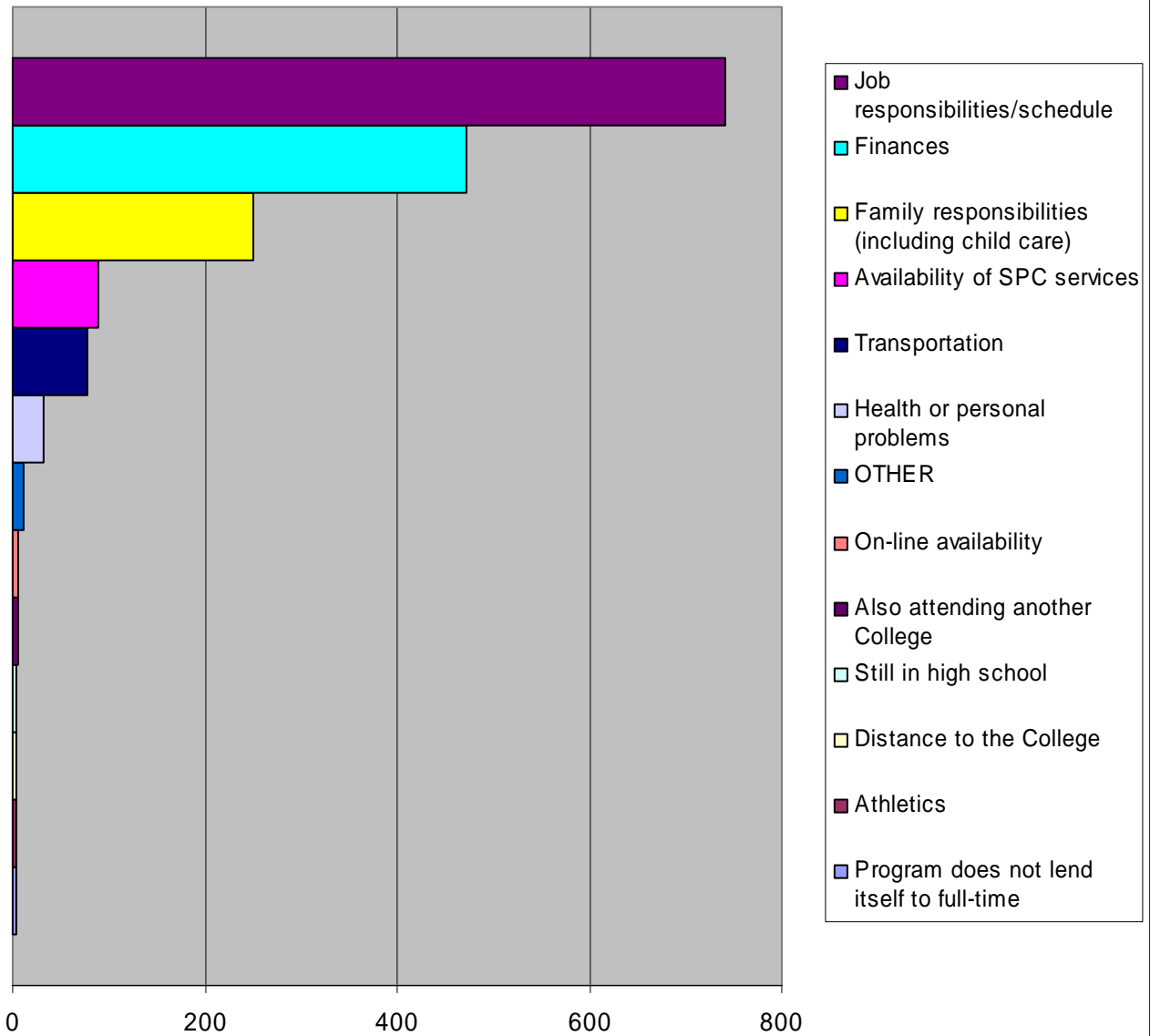


If You Plan to Enroll Part-time, is this Your Preference	
	Respondents
Yes	316
No	312

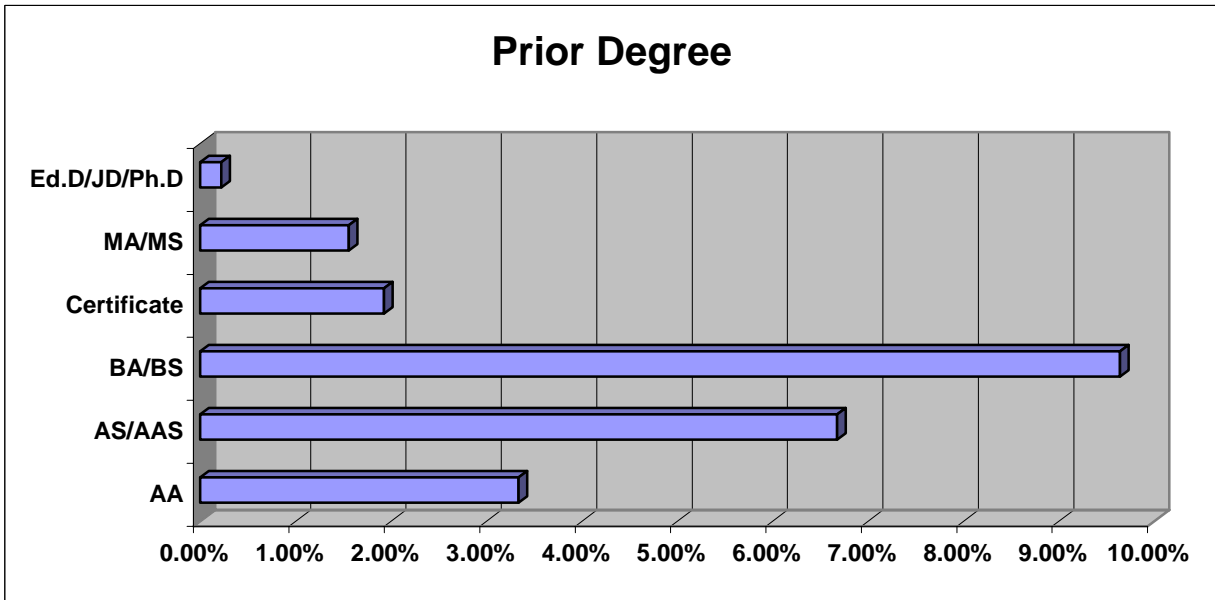
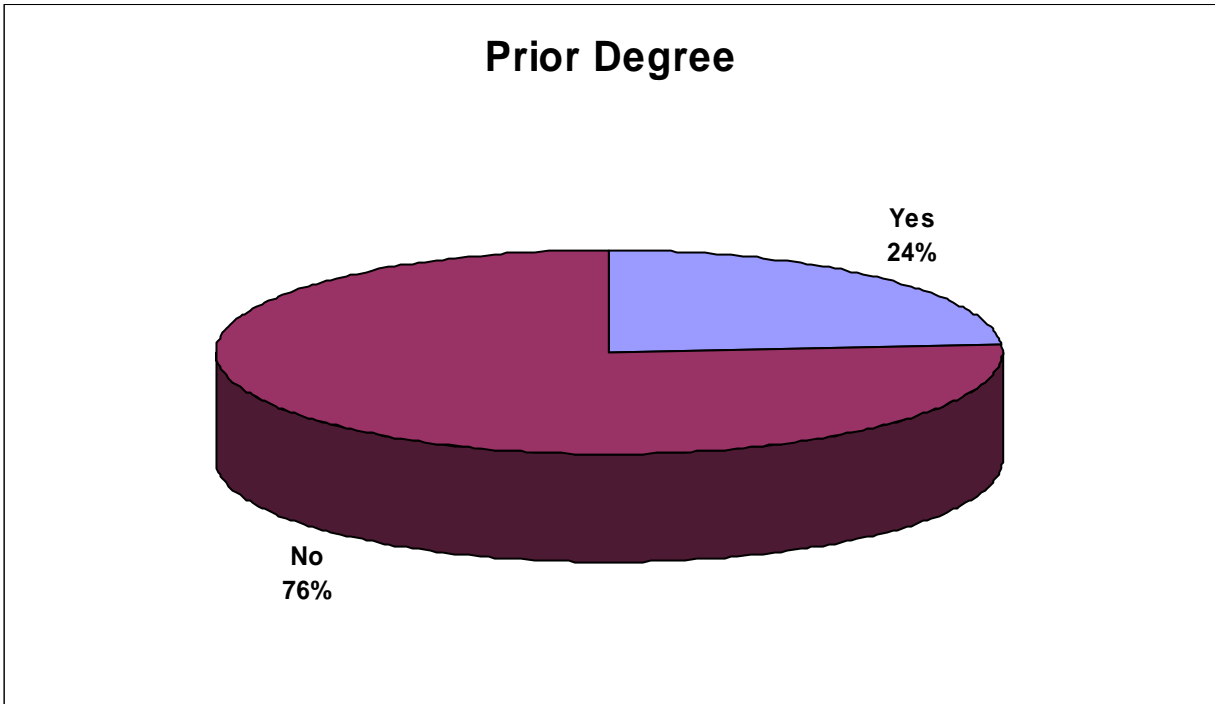


Circumstances Preventing Full-time	Responses
Housing	1
Program does not lend itself to full-time	3
Athletics	3
Distance to the College	4
Still in high school	4
Also attending another College	5
On-line availability	6
OTHER	8
Health or personal problems	32
Transportation	78
Availability of SPC services	89
Family responsibilities (including child care)	251
Finances	472
Job responsibilities/schedule	741

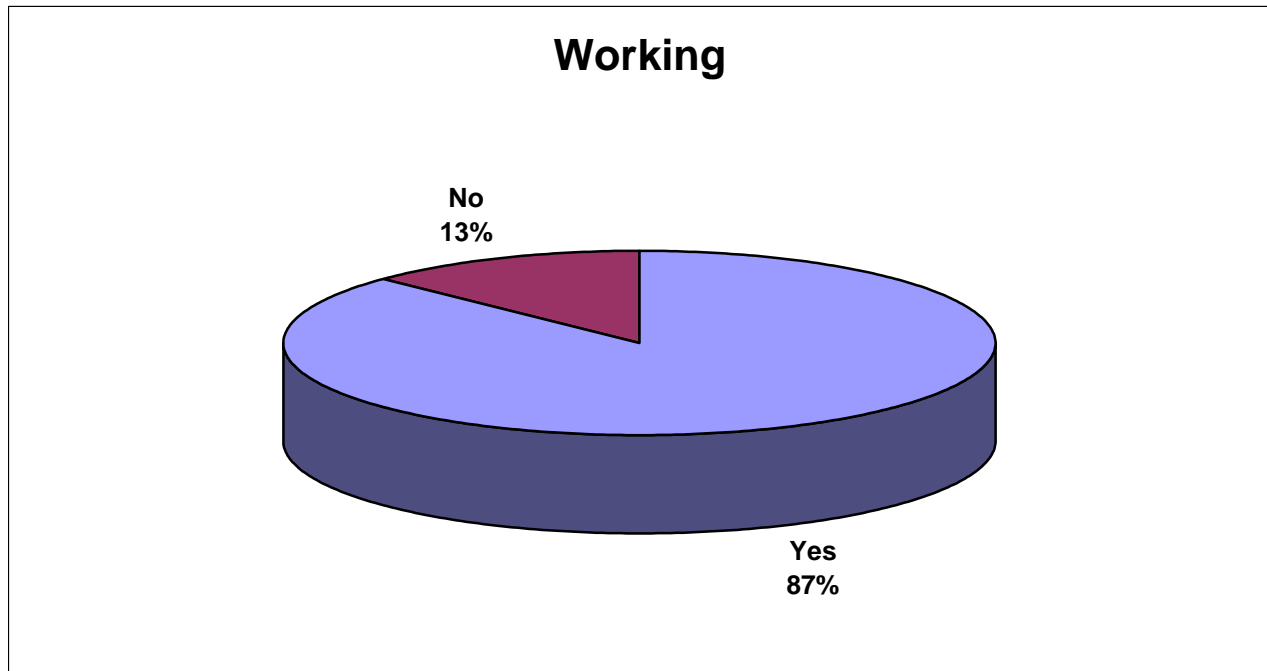
Circumstances



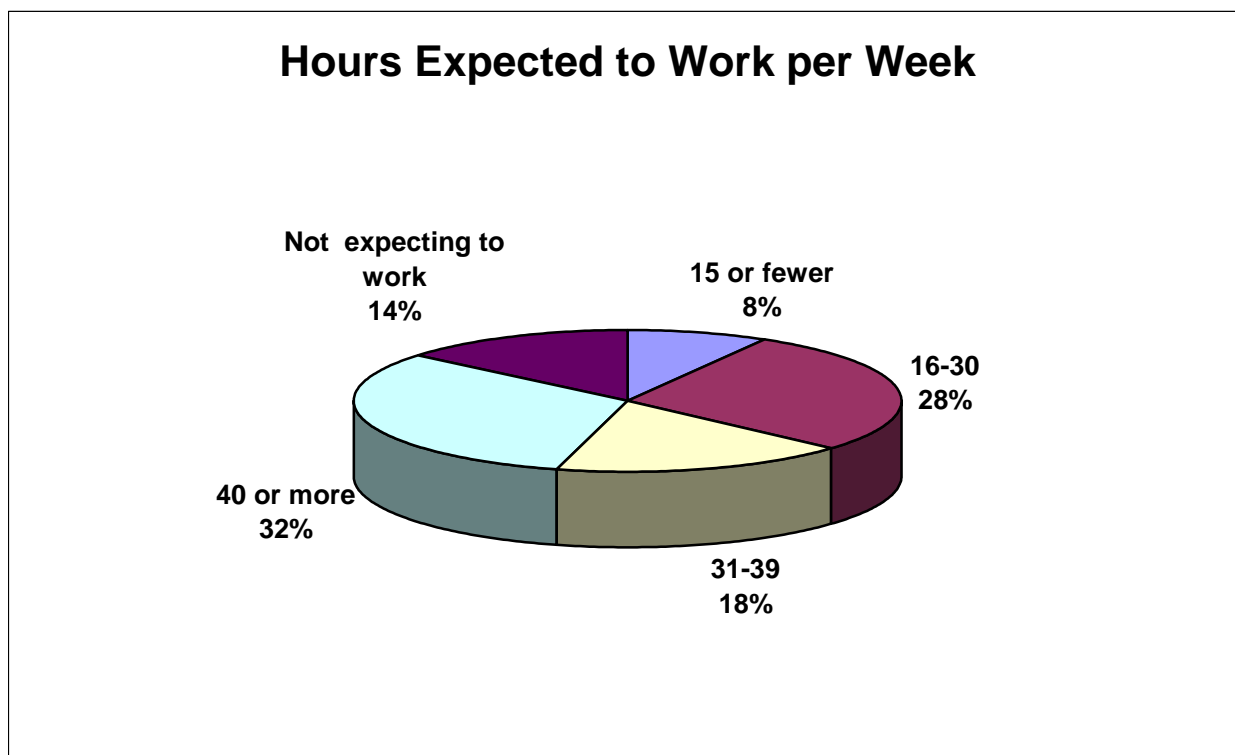
Have You Earned a Degree Prior to Enrolling at SPC?		
Prior Degree	Respondents	% of Total
Yes	323	24.00%
No	1025	76.00%



Working?	Respondents	% of Total
Yes	1176	87.20%
No	172	12.80%



How Many Hours Per Week Do You Expect to Work?		
Hours	Respondents	% of Total
15 or fewer	111	8.20%
16-30	384	28.50%
31-39	236	17.50%
40 or more	431	32.00%
Not expecting to work	186	13.80%



Section B – Factors Influencing the Decision to Apply to SPC

Students were asked to identify factors that influenced their decision to apply to the College. The five most often given responses are listed below in descending order.

2005/2006 Responses

- Courses or Programs Offered
- Close to Home
- Cost
- Friends recommendation
- Ease of Transfer to a State University

The top three student responses have remained the same over the last four years.

Student responses are very consistent from year to year on these survey questions. It is instructive to observe that the programs offers by the College are the most important factor in determining if students will apply to the College. Being close to home is the second most important drawing factor, while the relative low cost of our programs is the third most important consideration for the responding students. On the other hand “Club or Organizations” or “Visit by SPC Staff to HS/Employer” have little influence on most of our students’ decisions to apply.

The table below lists all the responses to this survey item. Items in red are where students wrote in factors not enumerated on the survey.

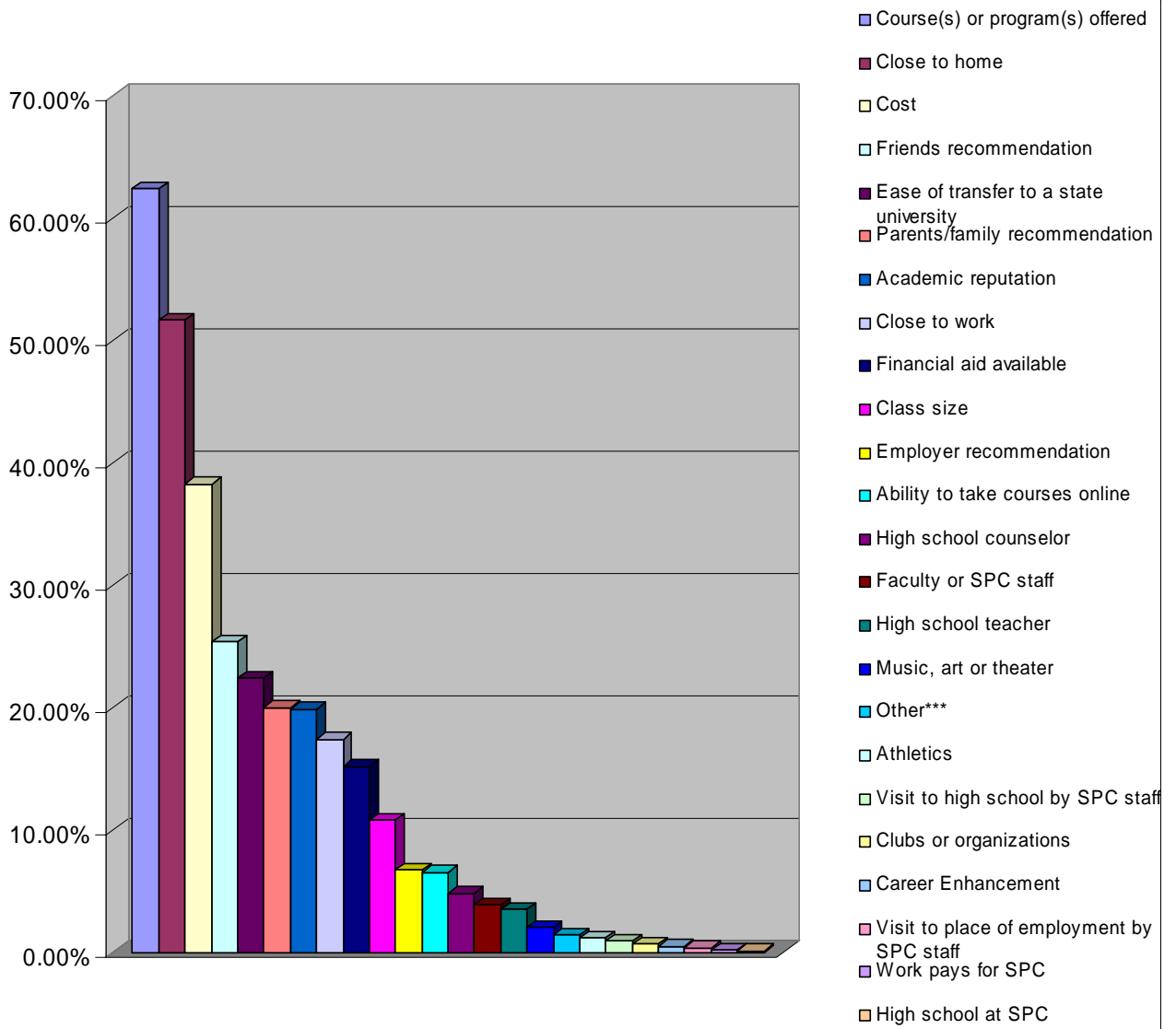
Factors Influencing the Decision to Apply to SPC Table

Factors	Respondents	% of Total
Course(s) or program(s) offered	841	62.39%
Close to home	696	51.63%
Cost	516	38.28%
Friends recommendation	342	25.37%
Ease of transfer to a state university	302	22.40%
Parents/family recommendation	270	20.03%
Academic reputation	268	19.88%
Close to work	235	17.43%
Financial aid available	205	15.21%
Class size	146	10.83%
Employer recommendation	91	6.75%
Ability to take courses online	88	6.53%
High school counselor	65	4.82%
Faculty or SPC staff	53	3.93%
High school teacher	48	3.56%
Music, art or theater	28	2.08%
Other***	19	1.41%
Athletics	16	1.19%
Visit to high school by SPC staff	13	0.96%
Clubs or organizations	9	0.67%
Career Enhancement	7	0.52%
Visit to place of employment by SPC	5	0.37%
Work pays for SPC	3	0.22%
High school at SPC	2	0.15%

Red items not listed on the survey

*** Includes other factors not listed on this table

Factors Influenced Your Decision to Apply



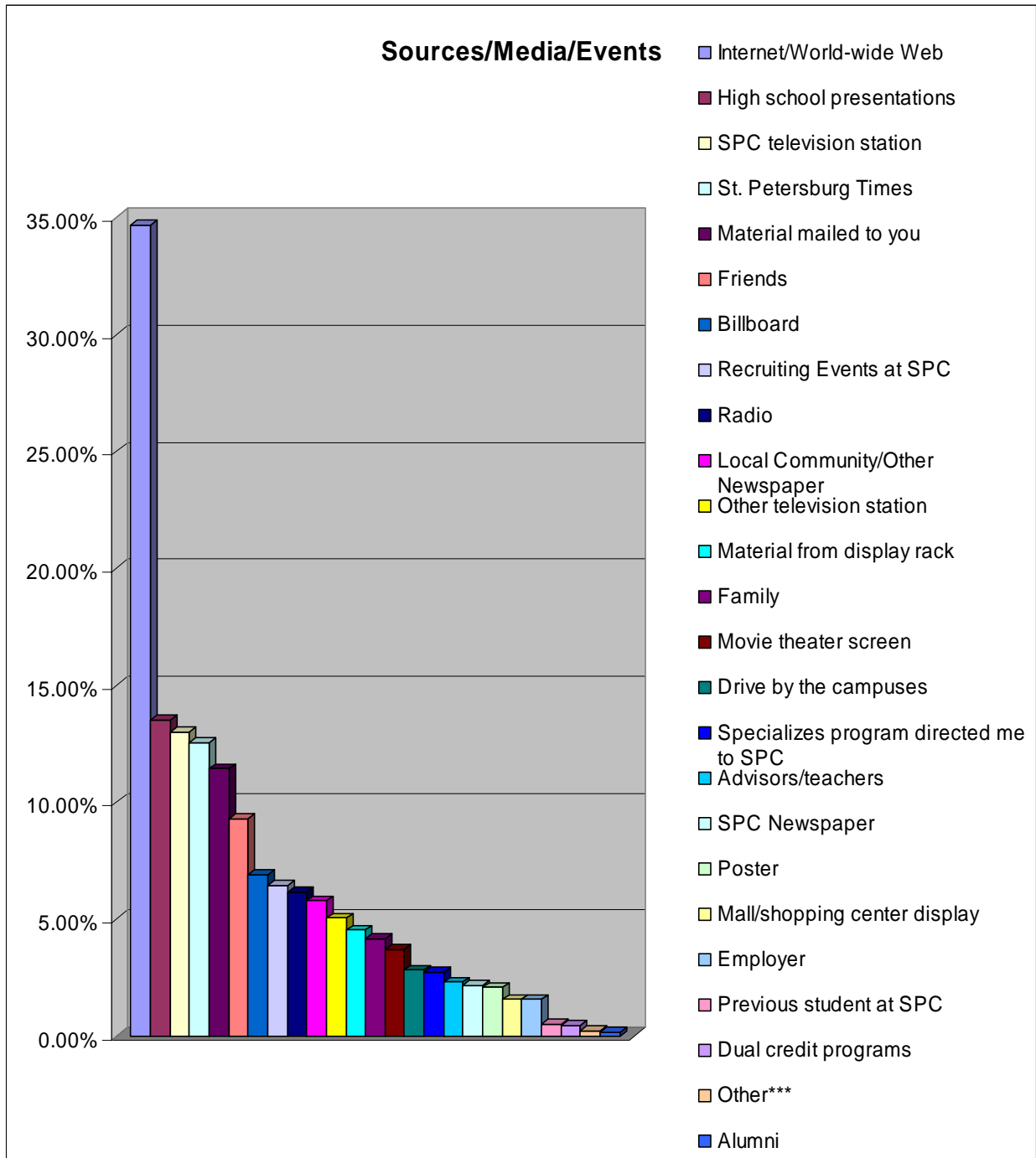
Section C - How Did You Learn About SPC

Students were asked to identify how they learned about the College by selecting from a roster of categories or by writing in their own responses. The five most frequently listed sources for learning about the College were:

- Internet/World-wide Web
- High School Presentation
- SPC Television Station
- St. Petersburg Times
- Material mailed to you

The College's web site and television station are consistent year after year as important tools for getting out the College's message but for the second year in a row "High School Presentations" fell in the second most important way students learned about the College. This must be based on new initiative by our recruiter over the last two years. A complete list of the methods used by students to learn about the College is provided in the following table and chart.

How Did You Learn About SPC Table



Section D – Rating of Importance of College Offices/Services

On the Entering Student Survey, students were asked to rate how important they thought 19 listed offices/services would be to them. The five offices/services perceived as the most important were:

- Academic Advising
- Financial Aid
- Library
- Career Counseling
- Career Assessment

Of the nineteen offices/services address in this survey “Academic Advising “and “Financial Aid” have appeared at or near the top of the list regarding their importance to students for as long as I can remember while “Student Activities” has been at or near the bottom of the list of all offices/services. Below is a table and chart with a complete roster of the nineteen offices/services and their mean importance scores. A “7” score indicates that the office/service is considered “Critical” important while a “1” score indicates that it is considered “unimportant”.

Expected Importance of College Offices/Services Table

Services	Mean
Academic Advising	6.07
Financial Aid Information and Services	5.61
The Library	5.20
Career Counseling	5.08
Career Assessment	4.98
Access to Computer Labs	4.81
Tutoring	4.77
Job Placement Services	4.76
Volunteer/Community Service Learning Experiences	3.74
Student Publications	3.54
Student Activities	3.36

Expected Importance of College Tutoring (Help Areas)

The table below separates the specific tutoring areas to focus on student expectations concerning how much help they envision needing in these specific skill areas. Students are most concerned about getting help with math and least concerned about getting help with reading.

Expected Importance of College Tutoring (Help Areas) Segregated from other Offices and Services

Based on a 7-point scale (7) "Critical" to (1) Unimportant"	Mean
Help With Math Skills	4.42
Help With Study Skills and Habits	4.07
Help With Time Management	3.92
Help With Writing Skills	3.86
Help With Test Anxiety	3.79
Help With Reading Skills	3.46

Section E - Effectiveness of Contacts

On the Entering Student Survey, students were asked to rate how effective they judged each of five issues. The table below lists the various contact modalities in descending order by satisfaction of contact as judged by the responding students. All five received ratings above (5.34) on the 7-point scale which indicates students were rather pleased with all of the College's efforts to contact them. "Contact by SPC during campus visit" was rated highest while "Visit by SPC Staff to Your School or Work" was rated the lowest.

Effectiveness of Contacts Table

Rating Contact Methods	Mean
Contact With SPC Staff During Campus Visit(s)	5.74
Information on College Publications	5.51
Clarity of College Publications	5.50
Telephone Contact With SPC Staff	5.35
Visit By SPC Staff to Your School or Work	5.34

Contact Method	Number of Contacts
Publications	1082
Telephone Contact(s)	924
Contact With SPC Staff During	805
Visit By SPC Staff to Your School or	547

Conclusion

Students entering St. Petersburg College programs encompass a broad range of age categories with over half the respondents to this survey being under the age of 25 years. Women continue to maintain a large majority of respondents with a sixty six percent of those that identified their gender being female. Sixty eight percent of the responding students reside in Pinellas County while an additional twenty six percent reside in other areas of Florida mostly in neighboring counties. Only six percent live outside of Florida. The ethnic background of the responding students has a similar proportion of minorities as that of Pinellas County as a whole with seventy three percent reporting their ethnicity as white, nine percent as black and nine percent as hispanic. A broad range of academic goals brings students to the College. But the largest group in this survey was in pursuit of an A.A. degree. Twenty four percent of the in-coming students have a prior college degree. Most of out students plan to take classes during the weekday but about a quarter are planning to attend SPC in the evening. Only three percent of the respondents plan to take classes on the weekend. The vast majority of our students plan on working while attending college and well over a quarter of all SPC students plan to work full-time or more. Fifty percent of the incoming students believed they will be attending college full-time; however, when you compare their expectation to what actually happens (“Factbook” information) you find that only about quarter of SPC students actually do. The circumstances that most often prevent our students from attending full-time are “Job Responsibility”, “Finances” and “Family Responsibilities. Of these three areas the College has the most ability to help with finances through scholarships and grants. Although the College is limited in its ability to assist with job and family responsibilities multiple class options and child care may help some students with these problems.

When asked “What factors influenced your decision to apply to SPC?” the “Courses or Programs Offered” was the most important factor followed by “Close to Home” and “Cost”.

When asked, “Through what sources/media/events have you learned about SPC?” a mixture of high and low technology approaches seemed to be effective in getting the College’s message out. “Internet/World Wide Web” “High School Presentations” and “SPC TV Station” led the way.

When asked the question “How important do you expect each of the following offices/services to be to you?” students responded that “Academic Advising”, “Financial Aid” and “The Library” were the most important offices/services while “Student Activity” was relatively unimportant to the respondents.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of the five contact methods all received marks above (5.34) on the 7-point rating scale. Thus all were viewed by the students as effective according to the College’s criteria of being at or above a 5 on a 7-point satisfaction scale.

Each department/unit of the College should review the findings of this survey so they may better align their efforts to the needs and expectations of our incoming students.