

2008-09 EMPLOYER SURVEY RESULTS A RESEARCH BRIEF

Research Briefs

Research Briefs are short publications prepared by the Departments of Academic Effectiveness and Assessment (AEA) and Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) that are intended to provide relevant information which assists in the performance improvement process used by St. Petersburg College (SPC). Research Brief topics include, but are not limited to, student achievement, state accountability measures, institutional survey results, student enrollment, and faculty/adjunct compensation.

Introduction

SPC annually conducts 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 Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Applied Science (BS/BAS), Associate in Science/Associate in Applied Science (AS/AAS), and Certificate programs. These programs focus on preparing students to enhance their skills, knowledge, reach higher levels of income, and increase personal/professional growth.

Data Collection

The Recent Alumni Survey was administered to 2008-09 SPC graduates. Graduates were asked to provide the name and address of their employer and whether they would 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 this employee should have obtained while at SPC. The last section of the survey contains a list of opportunities for employer involvement at SPC.

Employer surveys were sent out to three-hundred and nineteen (319) employers. One hundred and thirty-eight (138) surveys were returned resulting in an overall response rate of 43.3%. Employers of upper-division alumni had a 45.0% response rate, and employers of lower-division alumni had a response rate of 40.6%. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of recent alumni surveys and employer surveys sent and

returned by upper and lower division classification. It should be noted that of the one-hundred and ninety-one (191) employer surveys sent to employers of upper-division graduates, one-hundred and thirty-seven (137) were sent to employers of College of Education graduates. This group of recent alumni does not need to provide employer contact information or give permission to contact them, as the contact information is already supplied by the state of Florida. The State requires that all College of Education graduate employers be surveyed. Graduates of programs in other than the College of Education must provide their permission to SPC before the College can survey the employer.

Table 1

Response rate by program

Program Type	Alumni Surveys Sent	Alumni Surveys Returned	Employer Surveys Sent	Employer Surveys Returned	Return Rate
Lower Division Programs (AS/AAS, and Certificate Programs)	1,486	407	128	52	40.6%
Upper Division Programs (BS/BAS)	710	241	191	86	45.0%

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

Results

All twenty-five key general education competencies and foundational skill areas received mean scores between 4.0 and 4.4 on a 5-point Likert scale (5 indicates "excellent"). This response scale also included a "Not Applicable" (NA) rating.

- Almost one-hundred percent (99.2%) of the employers responding indicated they would hire another SPC graduate.
- Almost forty percent (39.5%) responding to the question regarding hourly compensation indicated their employees earn between \$15.00 and \$19.99 per hour (\$31,000 to \$41,999 annually).
- Almost fifty percent (47.8%) of respondents expressed an interest in participating in one or more of the College's five suggested employment activities. The most popular areas of interest were a willingness to provide opportunities for student co-op/internship placement (68.2%), to assist in job placement of graduates (43.9%), and to provide input about education/training needs for your workforce area (43.9%). [Note: The total exceeded 100% because this question allowed multiple responses by survey respondents.]

Employers indicated high levels of satisfaction with graduates' general education outcomes, with all outcomes receiving mean scores between 4.0 and 4.4. Three of the skill areas with the highest levels of satisfaction (means of 4.4) were in the area of "Work effectively with others in a variety of settings" and are listed below:

- Participates as a team player,

- Works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and
- Uses ethical courses of action.

The outcomes with the lowest mean rating (4.0) were "Databases" under the "Use of Technology" area and "Demonstrates leadership skills" from the "Work effectively with others in a variety of settings" area. "Demonstrates leadership skills" had the greatest standard deviation. This variation in reporting of perceived leadership skills may be the result of how leadership skills are defined by the respondents. Overall employer ratings of the graduates' general education outcomes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
2008-09 Overall Employer Responses

<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	138	4.4	0.75	---
Listening	138	4.3	0.81	---
Reading	136	4.4	0.72	2
Writing	136	4.3	0.78	1
<i>Use mathematical and computational skills:</i>				
Comfortable with mathematical calculations	124	4.3	0.80	12
Uses computational skills appropriately	126	4.3	0.78	10
Accurately interprets mathematical data	122	4.2	0.82	14
<i>Use the following forms of technology:</i>				
E-mail	124	4.4	0.79	11
Word Processing	118	4.3	0.76	17
Spreadsheets	86	4.1	0.82	4
Databases	95	4.0	0.86	39
Internet Research	107	4.3	0.79	25
<i>Think logically and critically to solve problems</i>				
Gathers and assesses relevant information	137	4.2	0.84	1
Inquires and interprets information	138	4.2	0.94	---
Organizes and evaluates information	138	4.2	0.89	---
Analyzes and explains information to others	138	4.2	0.90	---
Uses information to solve problems	136	4.2	0.89	---

Table 2 continued next page

Table 2, continued
2008-09 Overall Employer Responses

General Education Outcomes (Five point rating scale with five being the highest)	Item Ratings			
	N	Mean	SD	N/A*
<i>Work effectively with others in a variety of settings:</i>				
Participates as team player (e.g., groups projects)	136	4.4	0.81	2
Works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds	138	4.4	0.77	---
Uses ethical courses of action	137	4.4	0.81	---
Demonstrates leadership skills	136	4.0	1.09	2
<i>Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning:</i>				
Shows interest in career development	137	4.4	0.78	---
Open to new ideas and challenges	137	4.4	0.82	---
Willing to take on new responsibilities	136	4.3	0.85	1
Pursues additional educational opportunities	131	4.3	0.91	4

*The survey allowed employers to select N/A if a competency was non-applicable for an employee.

Table 3 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 twenty-four lower division graduates' general education outcomes. Of the twenty-five outcomes, nineteen received a mean score of 4.4 or higher. The remaining six had mean scores between 4.1 and 4.3.

Table 3
Employer Survey Response for Lower Division (AS/AAS, and Certificate Programs)

General Education Outcomes (Five point rating scale with five being the highest)	Item Ratings			
	N	Mean	SD	N/A*
<i>Communicate clearly and effectively with others through:</i>				
Speaking	52	4.5	0.73	---
Listening	52	4.5	0.78	---
Reading	51	4.5	0.73	1
Writing	50	4.5	0.76	1
<i>Use mathematical and computational skills:</i>				
Comfortable with mathematical calculations	44	4.4	0.78	7
Uses computational skills appropriately	45	4.5	0.73	6
Accurately interprets mathematical data	41	4.4	0.74	10

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Table 3, continued
Employer Survey Response for Lower Division (AS/AAS, and Certificate Programs)

<i>General Education Outcomes</i> <i>(Five point rating scale with five being the highest)</i>	<i>Item Ratings</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N/A*</i>
<i>Use the following forms of technology:</i>				
E-mail	41	4.7	0.69	10
Word Processing	37	4.4	0.73	14
Spreadsheets	25	4.3	0.75	26
Databases	29	4.1	0.83	22
Internet Research	32	4.5	0.76	18
<i>Think logically and critically to solve problems</i>				
Gathers and assesses relevant information	52	4.4	0.82	---
Inquires and interprets information	52	4.3	0.88	---
Organizes and evaluates information	52	4.3	0.86	---
Analyzes and explains information to others	52	4.3	0.83	---
Uses information to solve problems	51	4.4	0.91	---
<i>Work effectively with others in a variety of settings:</i>	51	4.4	0.91	---
Participates as team player (e.g., groups projects)	50	4.6	0.60	2
Works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds	52	4.5	0.75	---
Uses ethical courses of action	51	4.5	0.73	---
Demonstrates leadership skills	50	4.2	0.98	2
<i>Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning:</i>				
Shows interest in career development	52	4.4	0.78	---
Open to new ideas and challenges	52	4.5	0.75	---
Willing to take on new responsibilities	52	4.5	0.73	---
Pursues additional educational opportunities	49	4.4	0.84	3

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

Table 4 displays a breakdown of each outcome for the upper division programs (BS/BAS). Employers indicated high levels of satisfaction with general education outcomes for the 86 upper-division graduates. Twenty-four outcomes received mean scores between 4.0 and 4.4 while one received a mean score of 3.9.

Table 4
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	86	4.3	0.76	---
Listening	86	4.2	0.83	---
Reading	85	4.3	0.72	1
Writing	86	4.2	0.78	---
<i>Use mathematical and computational skills:</i>				
Comfortable with mathematical calculations	80	4.2	0.80	5
Uses computational skills appropriately	81	4.2	0.80	4
Accurately interprets mathematical data	81	4.1	0.84	4
<i>Use the following forms of technology:</i>				
E-mail	83	4.3	0.82	1
Word Processing	81	4.3	0.77	3
Spreadsheets	61	4.0	0.84	21
Databases	66	4.0	0.88	17
Internet Research	75	4.2	0.80	7
<i>Think logically and critically to solve problems</i>				
Gathers and assesses relevant information	85	4.1	0.85	1
Inquires and interprets information	86	4.1	0.97	---
Organizes and evaluates information	86	4.1	0.91	---
Analyzes and explains information to others	86	4.1	0.93	---
Uses information to solve problems	85	4.1	0.87	---
<i>Work effectively with others in a variety of settings:</i>				
Participates as team player (e.g., groups projects)	86	4.3	0.89	---
Works well with individuals from diverse backgrounds	86	4.4	0.78	---
Uses ethical courses of action	86	4.4	0.85	---
Demonstrates leadership skills	86	3.9	1.14	---
<i>Appreciate the importance of lifelong learning:</i>				
Shows interest in career development	85	4.4	0.79	---
Open to new ideas and challenges	85	4.3	0.87	---
Willing to take on new responsibilities	84	4.2	0.91	1
Pursues additional educational opportunities	82	4.2	0.95	1

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

Conclusion

Overall, results suggest that employers are satisfied with St. Petersburg College graduates' performance in the workplace. Employers rated most individuals as exhibiting a high level of preparatory skills as indicated by the above average ratings in the majority of skill areas.

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