

The Entering Student Survey

St. Petersburg College

2002-2003

The Entering Student Survey (ESS) was developed by St. Petersburg College as part of a comprehensive college-wide assessment program to ensure that the College delivers quality academic and support services to our students. The ESS was distributed to students making application to the College and an electronic version of the survey was available for students who preferred to complete the survey via computer. The primary purpose of the ESS is to evaluate the needs and expectations of in-coming students and to gauge student perception of the importance of the College's academic and student support services. There were 509 surveys returned from students who were applying for admission to the College during academic year 2002-2003. However, not every student answered every question and some responses were not included for technical reasons. As a consequence (N) may vary from question to question. Thus, in some tables ratios have been recalculated leaving out non responses. In the following tables those columns are labeled "Corrected Percent".

The survey has five major sections:

- Section A Demographic and Academic Information of the Students (Background Characteristics)
- Section B Factors Influencing Students' Decision to Apply
- Section C Sources and Media Through which Students First Learned about the College
- Section D Students 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.

A copy of the survey is included as Appendix A in the hard copy version of this report. The remainder of this report is a summary of the survey data with commentary.

Background Characteristics

The academic background and the demographic profile of the 509 respondents (N) to the “Entering Student Survey” are summarized in Table 1. A few highlights from the demographic profile are presented below, concentrating on the “Corrected Percent”. “Corrected Percent” are derived from recalculating the percentages based on the numbers of respondent that answer each question rather than the number that could have answers (N).

Thirty nine percent of the respondents were younger than 25 years of age.

Sixty three percent of the respondents were female.

Seventy two percent of the respondents listed their ethnicity as “White” while the second largest group, with twelve percent selected “Black”.

This year a very disproportionate number of student respondents were from our Health Education Center representing the largest group with thirty six percent of the total.

In the past the primary reason for attending the College was to pursue an A.A. degree. This year however the pursuit of an AS/Cert./New Career was the most often given response to that enquiry. This is consistent with the large number of students that answer our survey that listed the Health Education Center as their main campus.

Thirty two percent of our respondents plan to attend the College part-time.

Of the group that is part-time and wishes to be full-time the top three things that prevents them from attending full-time are “Job Responsibilities”, “Finances” and “Family Responsibilities”.

Thirty one percent of our respondents already have an academic degree.

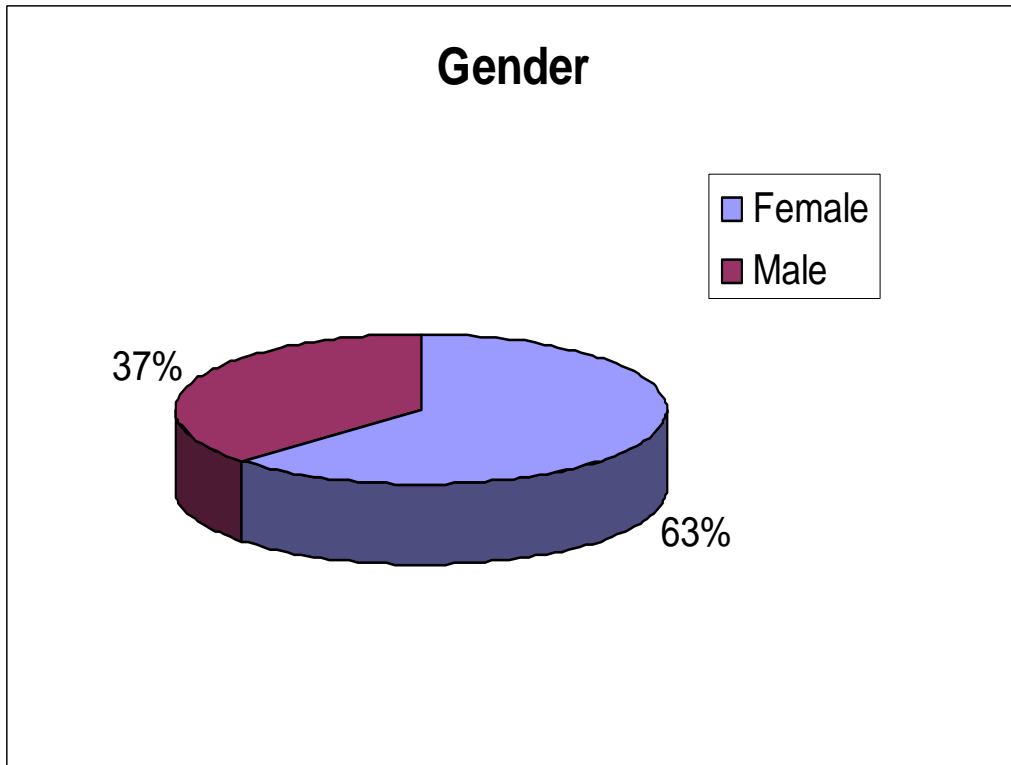
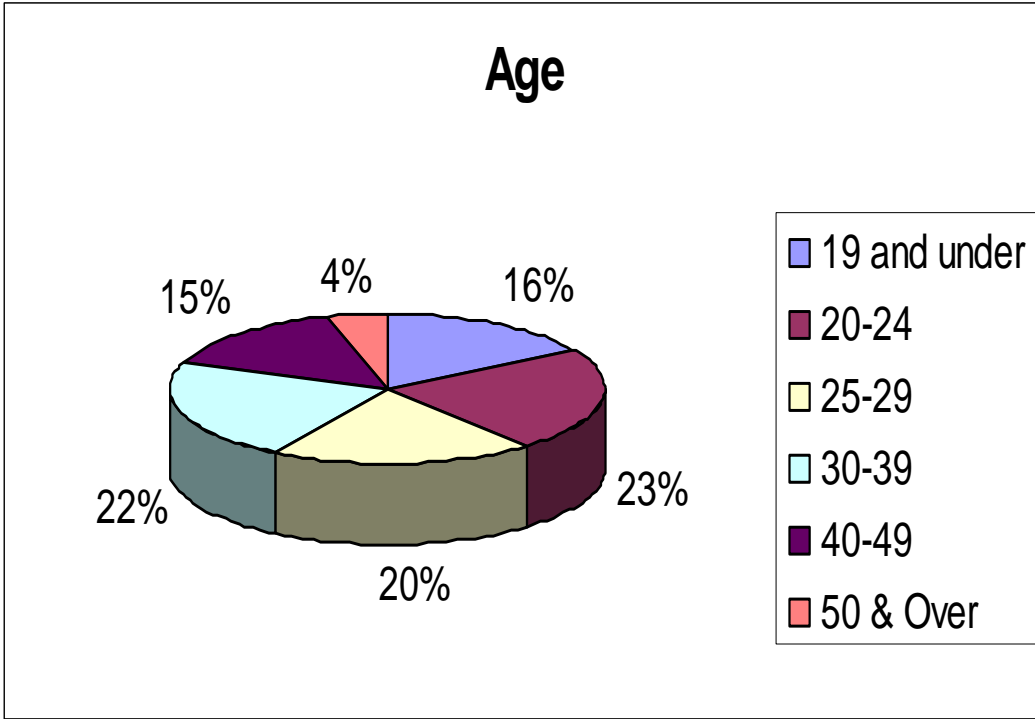
Sixty six percent of our students plan to work more than sixteen hours per week while attending college and twenty seven percent plan to work full-time or more.

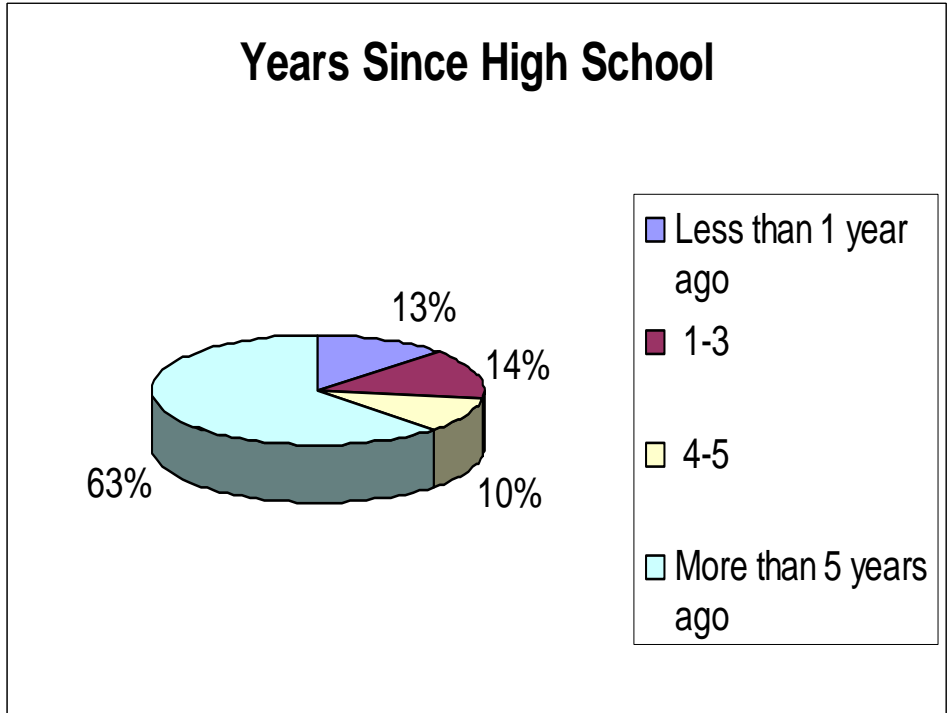
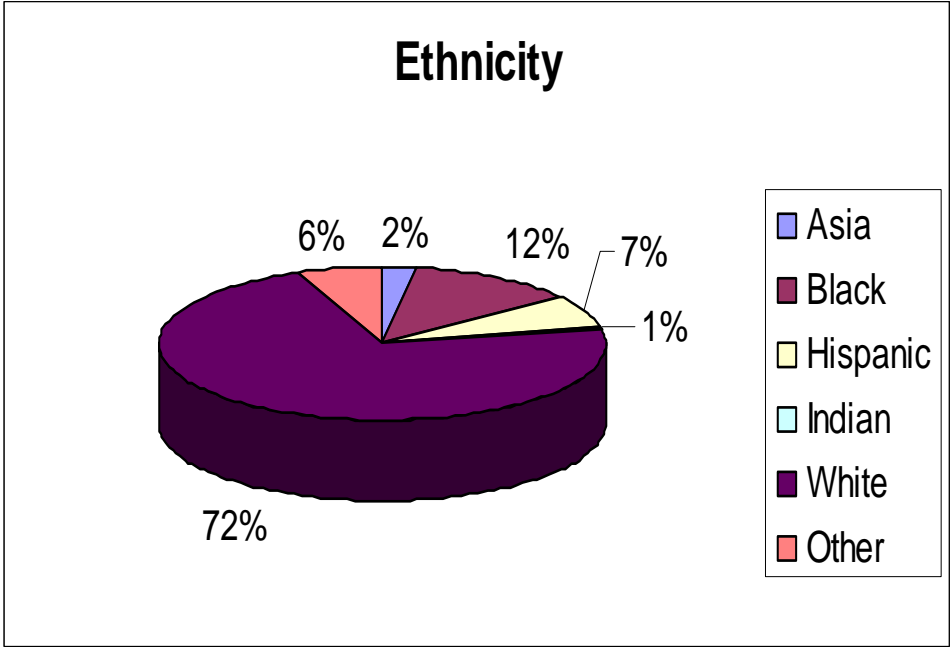
Table 1
Background/Demographic Information on Entering Students 2002/2003
(N=509)

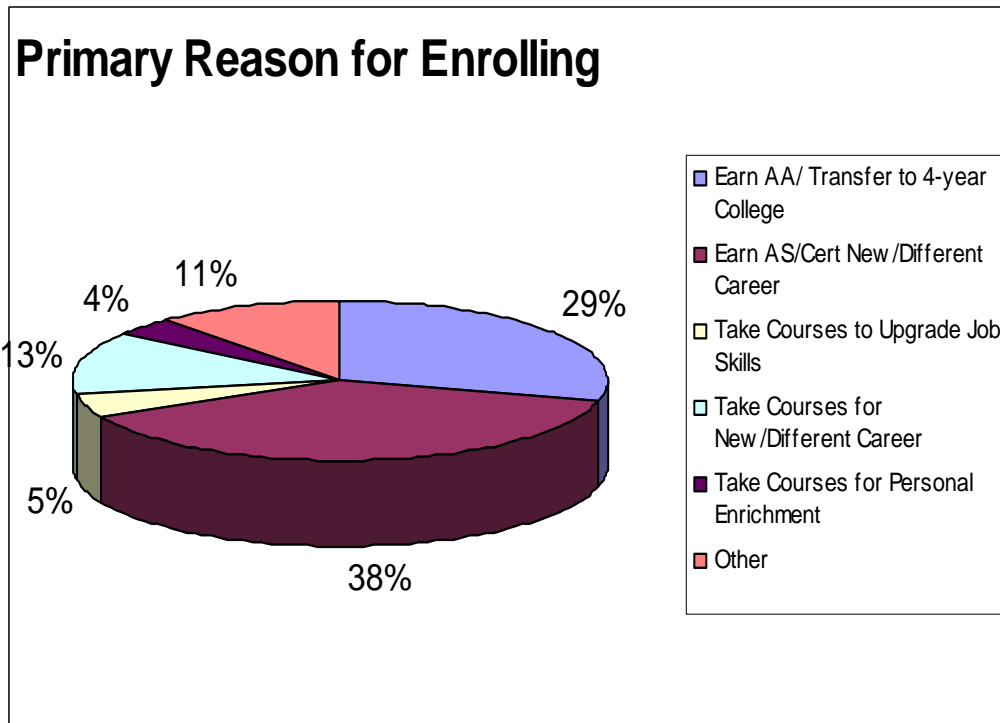
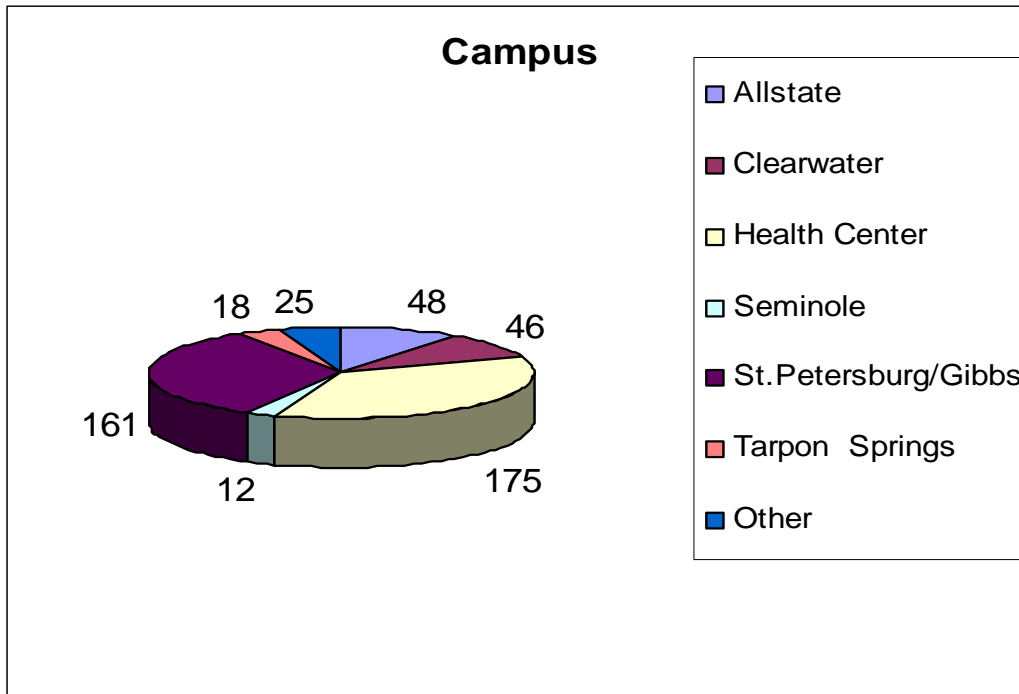
	Number	Percent	* Corrected Percent
Age			
19 and under	77	15%	16%
20-24	108	21%	23%
25-29	95	19%	20%
30-39	106	21%	22%
40-49	70	14%	15%
50 & Over	21	4%	4%
No Response	31	6%	
Gender			
Female	256	50%	63%
Male	150	29%	37%
No Response	103	20%	
Ethnicity			
Asia	12	2%	2%
Black	58	11%	12%
Hispanic	33	6%	7%
Indian	3	1%	1%
White	345	68%	72%
Other	30	6%	6%
Missing	28	6%	
Years Since High School			
Less than 1 year ago	64	13%	13%
1-3	70	14%	14%
4-5	51	10%	10%
More than 5 years ago	305	60%	62%
No Response	19	4%	
Campus for Service			
Allstate	48	9%	10%
Clearwater	46	9%	9%
Health Center	175	34%	36%
Seminole	12	2%	2%
St.Petersburg/Gibbs	161	32%	33%
Tarpon Springs	18	4%	4%
Other	25	5%	5%
No Response	23	5%	

	Number	Percent	* Corrected Percent
Primary Reason Enrolled at SPC			
Earn AA/ Transfer to 4-year College	140	28%	29%
Earn AS/Cert New/Different Career	185	36%	38%
Take Courses to Upgrade Job Skills	23	5%	5%
Take Courses for New/Different Career	62	12%	13%
Take Courses for Personal Enrichment	17	3%	4%
Other	55	11%	11%
No Response	27	5%	
Plan to Take Classes			
During the Day	320	63%	66%
In the Evening	156	31%	32%
On the Weekend	9	2%	2%
No Response	24	5%	
Prefer to Attend Classes			
Weekday Mornings	164	40%	43%
Weekday Afternoons	41	10%	11%
Weekday Evenings	91	22%	24%
Anytime During Week	45	11%	12%
Anytime During Weekend	7	2%	2%
No Preference	33	8%	9%
No Response	34	8%	
Plan to Enroll			
For Credit - Full-time	288	57%	63%
For Credit - Part-time	147	29%	32%
Not for Credit	19	4%	4%
No Response	55	11%	
	Number	Percent of Total	
Circumstances Prevented			
Job Responsibilities	118	23%	
Finances	74	15%	
Family Responsibilities	41	8%	
Other	32	6%	
Transportation	27	5%	
Availability of SPC Courses	11	2%	
Availability of SPC Services	7	1%	
Highest Degree			
	Number	Percent	
AS/AAS	80	16%	
BA/BS	38	7%	
AA	31	6%	
MA/MS	6	1%	
Other	5	1%	
Ed.D/JD/Ph.D	1	0%	

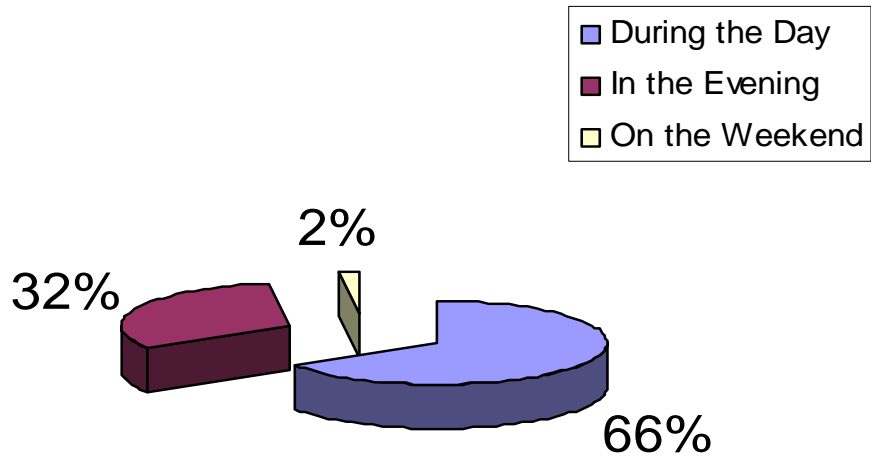
Hours Per Week You Expect to Work	Number	Percent of Total
15 or Fewer	42	8%
16-30	118	23%
31-39	83	16%
40 or More	139	27%
Expecting to work at least some	382	75%



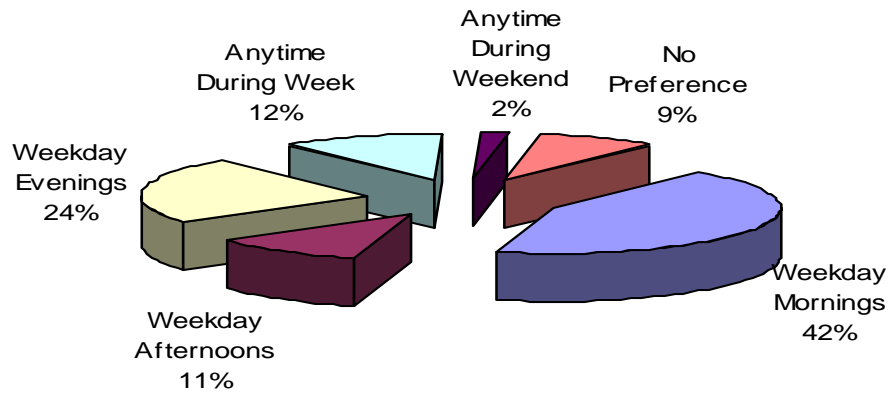




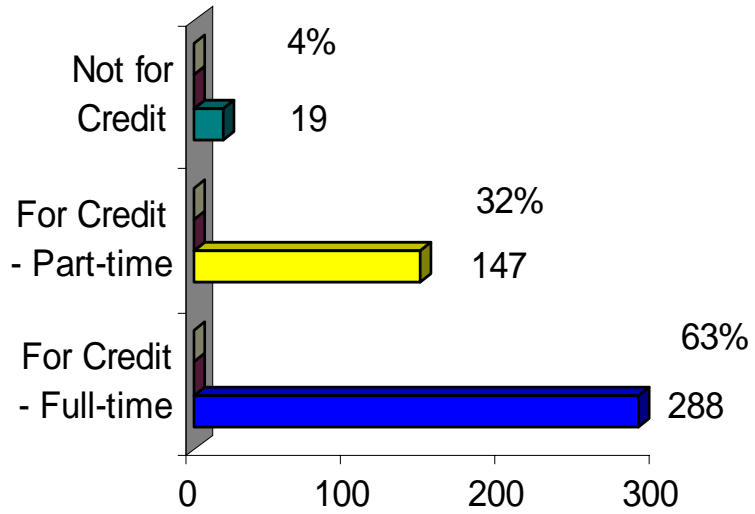
Plan to Take Classes



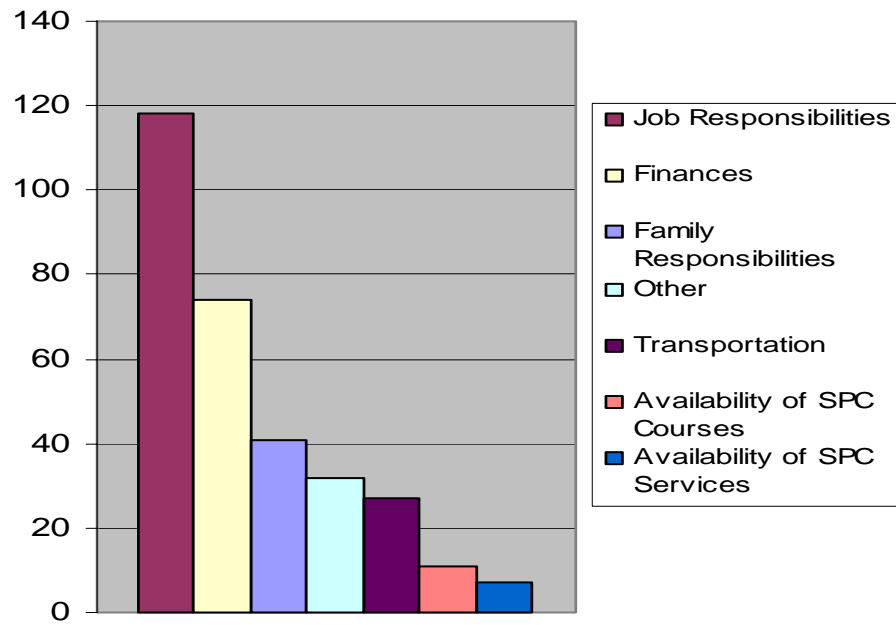
Prefer to Attend Classes

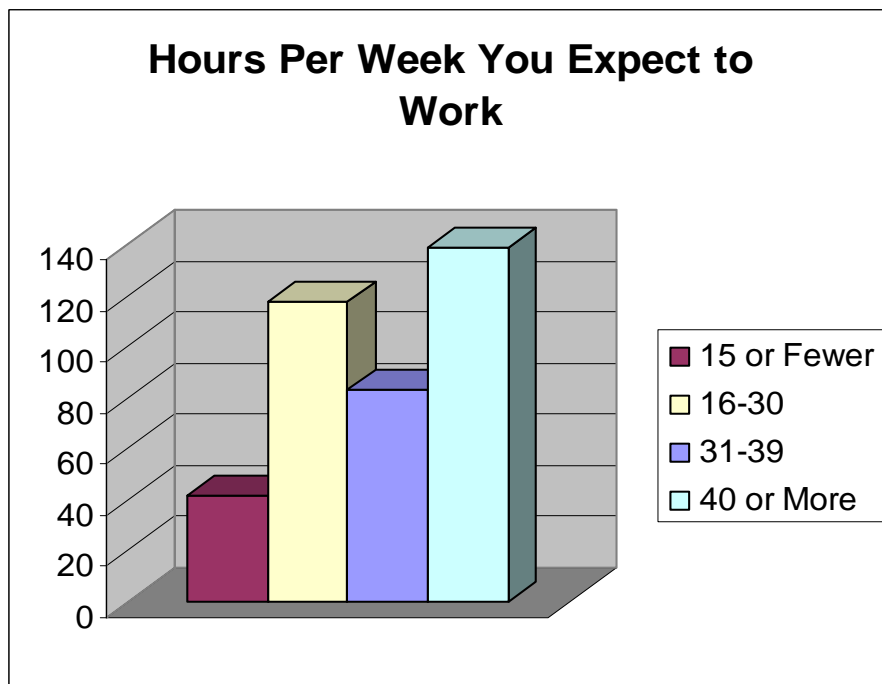
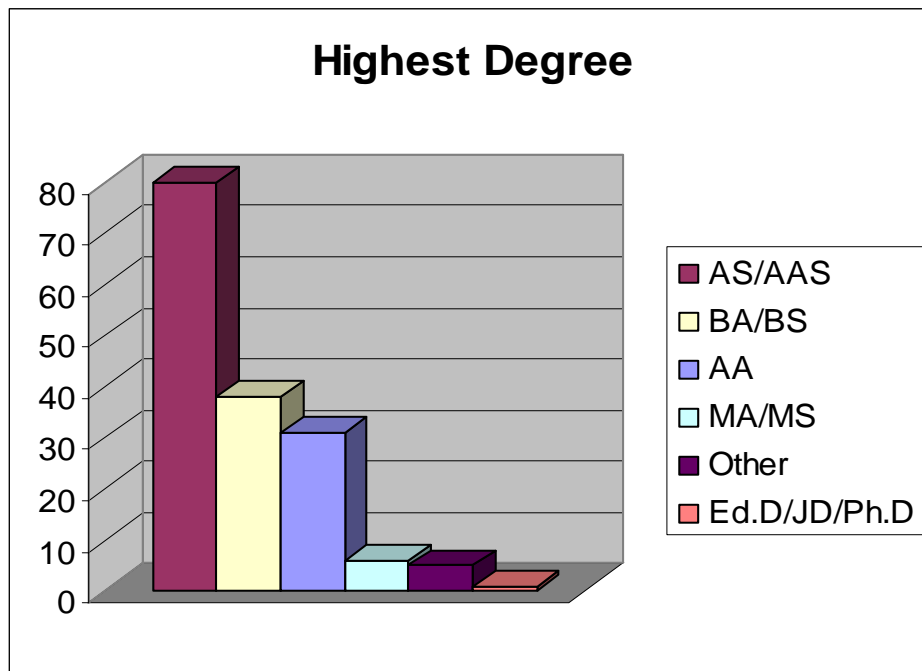


Plan to Enroll



If Disire Full-time What Circumstance Prevented





Factors Influencing the Decision to Attend SPC

Table 2 lists the factors that influenced the responding students' decision to apply to SPC in descending order. The five most influential factors listed were as follows:

- Courses or Programs Offered
- Close to Home
- Cost
- Academic Reputation
- Financial Aid Available

While the five least listed factors included:

- Music, Art, or Theater
- High School Teacher
- Club or Organizations
- Athletics
- Visit by SPC Staff to HS/Employer

Table 2
Factors That Influence Students' Application to SPC
(N=509)

	Frequency	Percent
Courses or Programs Offered	307	60%
Close to Home	175	34%
Cost	142	28%
Academic Reputation	101	20%
Financial Aid Available	77	15%
Parents/Family Recommendation	74	15%
Ease of Transfer to State University	61	12%
Close to Work	57	11%
Friend's Recommendation	48	9%
Other	37	7%
Employer Recommendation	29	6%
Class Size	26	5%
Faculty or SPC Staff	15	3%
High School Counselor	10	2%
Music, Art, or Theater	8	2%
High School Teacher	4	1%
Club or Organizations	4	1%
Athletics	4	1%
Visit by SPC Staff to HS/Employer	0	0%

How Do Students Learn About SPC

Table 3 shows the major information sources that the respondents to the survey used to learn about the College. The five most frequently list sources were:

- Other
- SPC Television Station
- Internet/World Wide Web
- Material Mailed to You
- Billboards

“Other” meaning some other non-listed categories was in fact the item that the respondents cited most often as to how they learned about the College which indicates a large variety of information sources are used by our students to learn about the College.

The five least used information sources were:

- Tampa Tribune
- SPC Open Houses
- Other Television Stations
- College Nights
- Mall/ Shopping Center Displays

Table 3
Sources Students Used to Learn About SPC
(N=415)

	Frequency	Percent
Other	102	25%
SPC Television Station	64	15%
Internet/World Wide Web	60	14%
Material Mailed to You	51	12%
Billboards	42	10%
St. Petersburg Times	41	10%
High School Presentations	31	7%
SPC Newspaper	22	5%
Local/Community Papers	22	5%
Material from Display Racks	21	5%
Movie Theater Screens	19	5%
Material You Picked Up at -----	19	5%
Radio Stations	16	4%
Posters	15	4%
Tampa Tribune	15	4%
SPC Open Houses	9	2%
Other Television Stations	8	2%
College Nights	8	2%
Mall/ Shopping Center Displays	0	0%

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. Table 4 lists the various offices/services in descending order by importance as judged by the responding students. The five offices/services perceived as the most important were:

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

The five judged the least important were:

- Help in Writing
- Help in Reading
- Volunteer Experiences
- Student Publications
- Student Activities

Table 4
Expected Importance of College Offices and Services

Based on a 7-point scale (7) “Critical” to (1) “Unimportant”

Office/Service	Mean
Academic Advising	6.04
Library	5.59
Financial Aid	5.51
Career Counseling	5.46
Career Assessment	5.34
Access to Computers	5.15
Job Placement	5.02
Tutoring	5.02
Help in Math	4.61
Help in Study skills	4.51
Help in Use of Computer	4.42
Help in Test Anxiety	4.35
Help in Time Management	4.31
Help in Communication Skills	4.25
Help in Writing	4.18
Help in Reading	3.97
Volunteer Experiences	3.87
Student Publications	3.52
Student Activities	3.29

Expected Importance of College Tutoring (Help Areas)

Table 5 separates the specific tutoring areas from the other College offices/service 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.

Table 5
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 in Math	4.61
Help in Study skills	4.51
Help in Use of Computer	4.42
Help in Test Anxiety	4.35
Help in Time Management	4.31
Help in Communication Skills	4.25
Help in Writing	4.18
Help in Reading	3.97

Effectiveness of Contacts

On the Entering Student Survey, students were asked to rate how effective they judged each of five methods of contacting them. Table 6 lists the various contact modalities in descending order by importance as judged by the responding students. There was only a (.29) separation between all five methods of contact and all five received ratings above (5.53) on the 7-point scale which indicates students were rather pleased with all of the Colleges efforts to contact them. Clarity of Publications” was rated highest while “SPC Telephone Contact with Staff” “was rated lowest.

Table 6
Effectiveness of Contacts

Based on a 7-point scale (7) “Excellent” to (1) “Poor”

Contact Source	Means
Clarity of publications	5.82
Information content	5.74
Contact with SPC staff Campus Visits	5.71
Visit by SPC staff at Sch/Wk	5.59
Telephone contacts	5.53

Conclusions

The College serves a rather broad range of ages with only thirty nine percent of the respondents to the survey falling under the age of 25 years. Women continue to be in the majority at the College with a sixty three percent majority. The ethnic background of the student body is similar to that of Pinellas County as a whole. Most students want to attend class during the weekday. The vast majority of our students plan on working while attending college and almost one third plan to work full-time or more. Over half of the student body believes they will attend college full-time but when one compares this expectation to the “Factbook” you find that only about one fourth of our students actually do. Of those that desire to be full-time but something prevents them from doing so; the most often cited preventing circumstances are “Job Responsibility” or “Finances”. A broad range of academic goals brings students to the College but the largest group in this survey was in pursuit of an AS/Cert/ New Different Career. This is probably the results of a disproportionate number of respondents coming from the Health Education Center.

When asked “What factors influenced your decision to apply to SPC?” the “Courses or Programs Offered” was by far the most important factor followed by “Close to Home”. On the other hand “Music, Art, or Theater”, “High School Teacher”, “Clubs or Organizations”, “Athletics” and “Visit by SPC Staff to HS/Employer” were not very important to most students. However, these seemingly unimportant factors may have been the motivating factors that caused these responding students to come to this college.

When asked, “Through what sources/media/events if any, have you learned about SPC?” a mixture of high and low technology approaches seemed to be effective in getting our message out. “SPC TV Station” and “Internet/World Wide Web” led the way followed by “Material Mailed to You” and “Billboards”. However, it appears that “SPC Open Houses”, “Other Television Stations”, “College Nights”, and “Mall/Shopping Center Displays” do not have a large impact on our students.

When asked “How important do you expect each of the following offices/services to be to you?” students responded that “Academic Advising”, “Library”, “Financial Aid”, and “Career Counseling”, were the most important. “Help in Reading”, “Volunteer Experiences”, “Student Publication” and “Student Activity” were relatively unimportant to the respondents.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of the five contact methods listed in “Table 6”, all were viewed by the students as effective and all received marks above (5.53) on the 7-point rating 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 entering students.

