The Entering Student Survey

St. Petersburg College

2004-2005

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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 2004-2005 iteration of the ESS was available to matriculating students in a paper and pencil version and in an electronic version. One hundred and thirty seven students completed the paper and pencil version of the survey while one hundred and four students selected to complete the electronic version of 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 to them of various academic and student support services and determine their satisfaction with a mixture of contact method used by the College. In total there were two hundred and forty one surveys returned from students who were applying to the College during academic year 2004-2005. 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   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 Demographic and Academic Information of the Students

The demographic profile and academic background of the 241 respondents (N) to the "Entering Student Survey" are summarized in the following narrative, tables, and charts.

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

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

Seventy percent of the respondents were from Pinellas County, while an additional twenty five percent of the respondents identified other Florida counties as their place of residency. Only four percent of our students resided outside Florida.

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

Sixty five percent of the respondents listed their ethnicity as "White" while the second largest group, with twenty one percent of the total selected "Black" as their ethnicity.

As it would be expected, the largest group of respondents was from St Petersburg/Gibbs Campus representing forty three percent of the total.

This year the most often stated reason for attending the College was to pursue an A.A.

Fifty seven percent of our respondents plan to attend the College part-time.
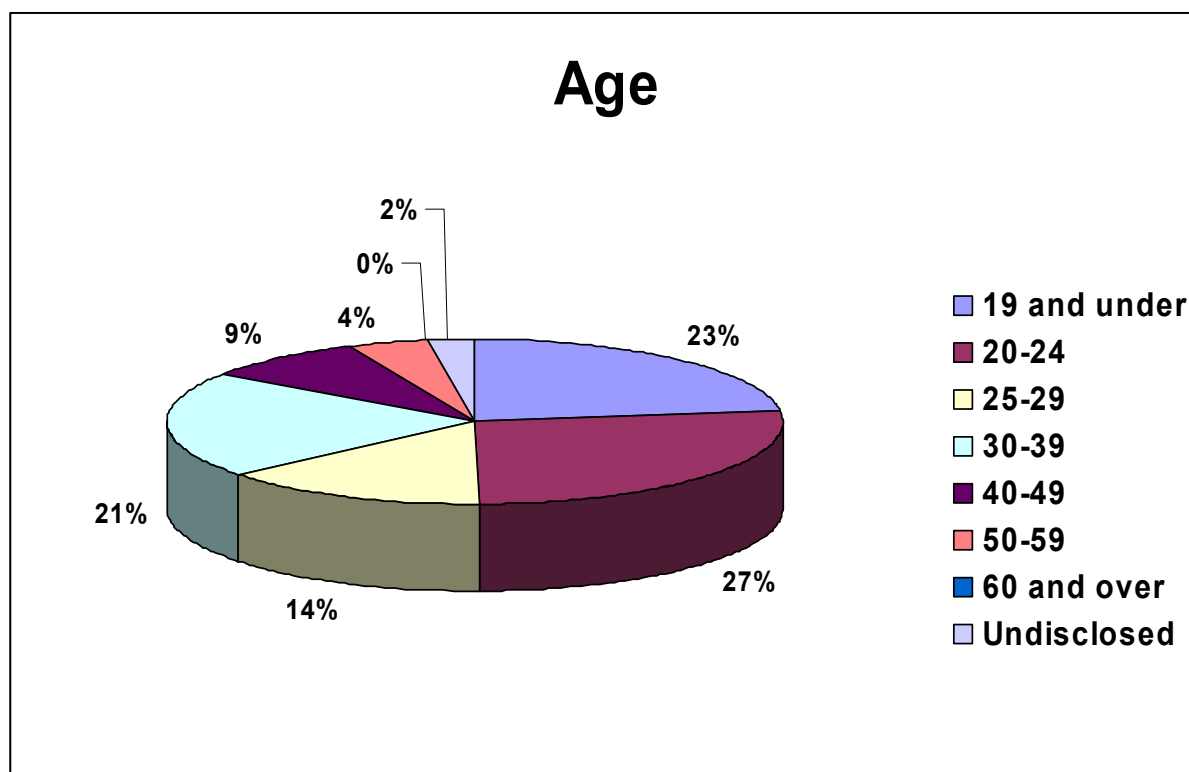
Of the fifty seven percent of our students that are attending part-time, thirty eight percent of that group would rather be full-time. The primary reasons that prevented responding students from attending full-time are the following: "Job Responsibilities", "Finances" and "Family Responsibilities". Of this grouping, SPC can only significantly impact student "Finances" via increased scholarships and grants. There is not much the College can to help with "Job Responsibilities" and "Family Responsibilities".

Nineteen percent of our respondents already have an academic degree.

Seventy three percent of our students plan to work more than sixteen hours per week while attending college and thirty four percent plan to work full-time or more.

Background/Demographic Information on Entering Students 2004/2005 Tables and Charts

Ages	Respondents	% of Total
19 and under	55	22.82%
20-24	65	26.97%
25-29	34	14.11%
30-39	50	20.75%
40-49	21	8.71%
50-59	10	4.15%
60 and over	0	0.00%
Undisclosed	6	2.49%
Responses	**241**	**100%**

Age

2%
0%
4%
9%
21%
14%
23%
27%

□ 19 and under
■ 20-24
□ 25-29
□ 30-39
■ 40-49
■ 50-59
■ 60 and over
□ Undisclosed

Gender

	Respondents	Percent
Male	73	30%
Female	134	56%
Undisclosed	34	14%
	241	100%

Gender

14%

30%

56%

☐ Male
■ Female
☐ Undisclosed
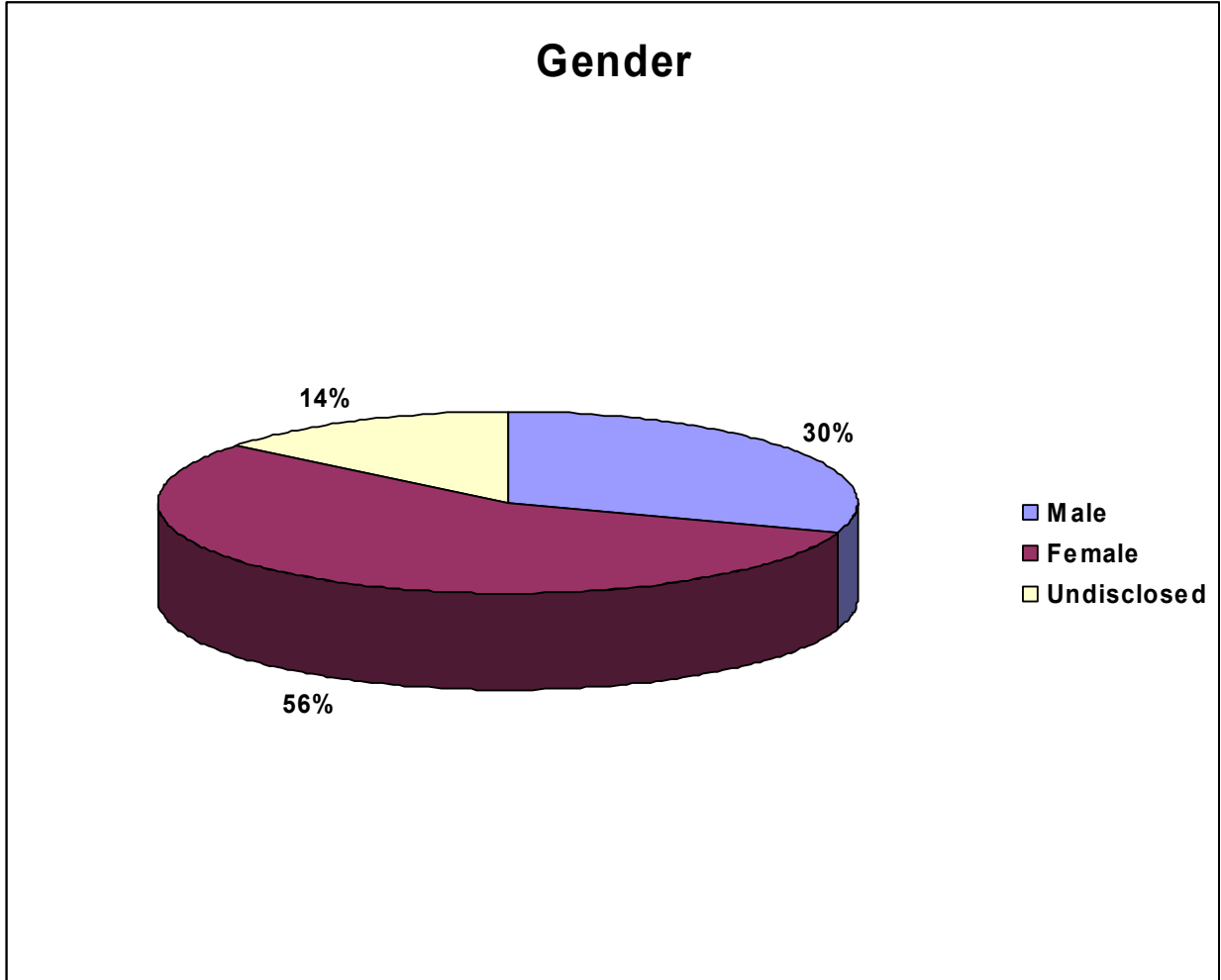
Time Since Graduated High School	Respondent	Percent
Less than 1 year ago	45	19%
1-3 years ago	45	19%
4-5 years ago	35	15%
More than 5 years ago	105	44%
Undisclosed	11	5%
	241	100%

Time Since Graduation High School
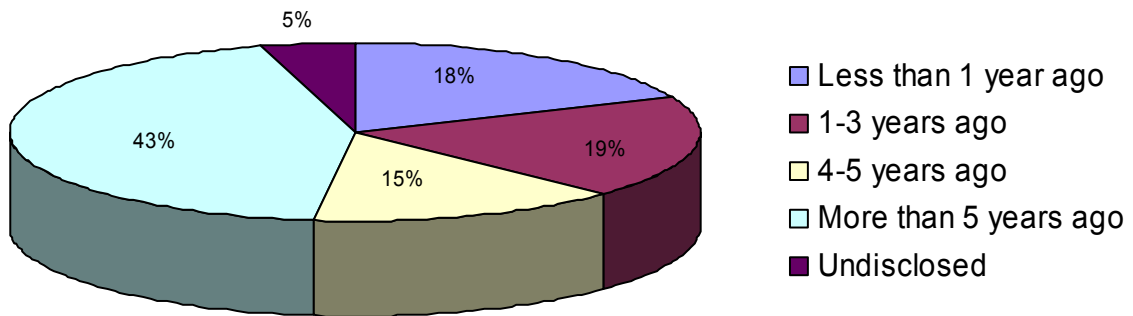
Campus

	Respondents	Percent
Allstate	24	10%
Clearwater	39	16%
eCampus	11	5%
Health Center	10	4%
Seminole	9	4%
SPC Downtown	6	2%
St Pete-Gibbs	104	43%
Tarpon Springs	20	8%
Other or All	18	7%
	241	100%
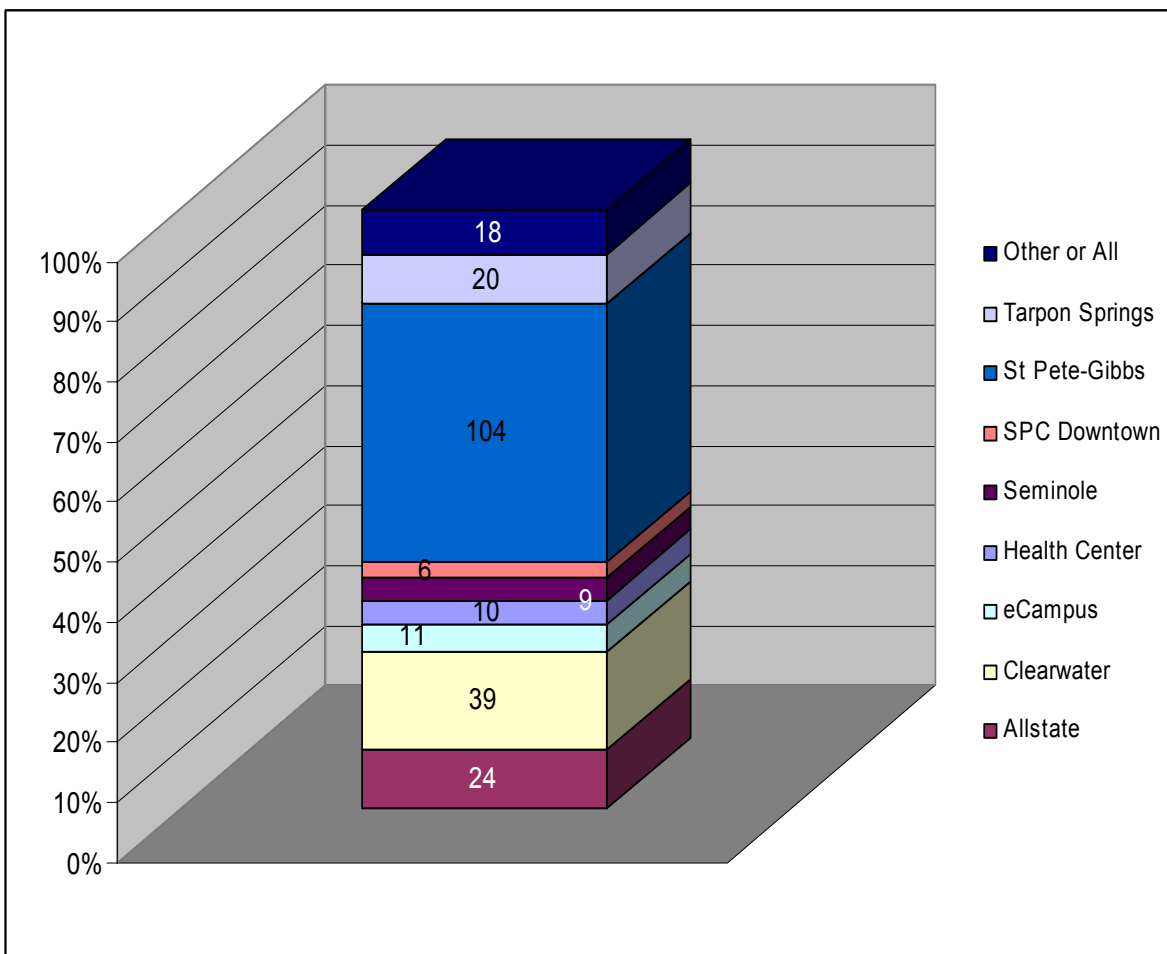
Location by Zip Code
Summary of Survey Data

Other FL Counties 25%

Out of State 4%

Pinellas 71%
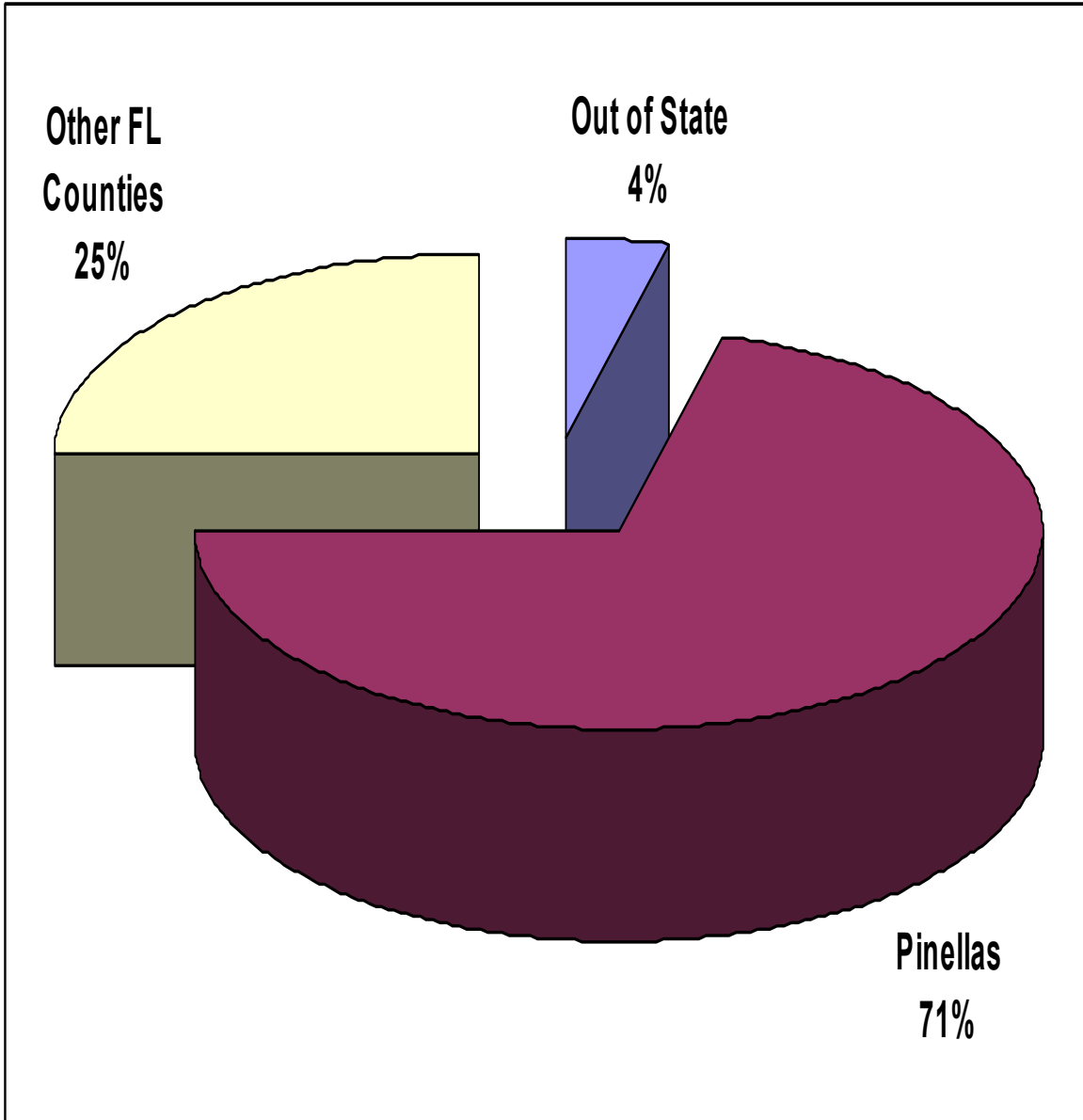
Ethnicity

	Respondents	Percent
Alaskan Native	0	0%
American Indian	2	1%
Asian Pacific Islander	3	1%
Black/Non-Hispanic	50	21%
Hispanic	17	7%
White	156	65%
Other	4	2%
Undisclosed	9	4%
	241	100%
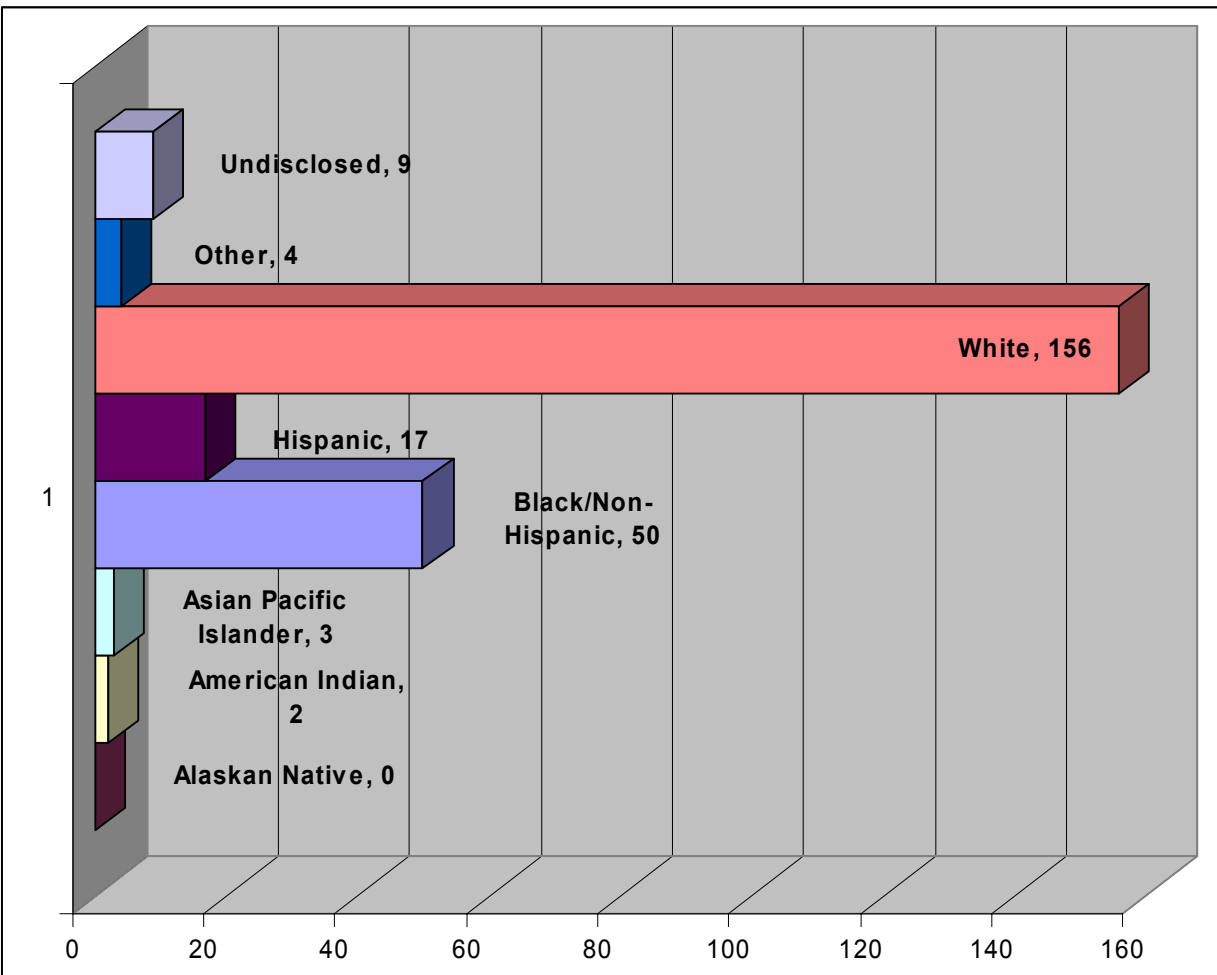
Reason for Enrolling	Respondents	Percent
To earn an AA degree and transfer to a four-year college or university	90	37%
To earn an AS degree or certificate for entry into a new or different career	57	24%
To take a course or courses for a new or different career	38	16%
Undisclosed	21	9%
To take a course or courses to upgrade job skills	16	7%
Other	16	7%
To take a course or courses for	3	1%
	241	100%
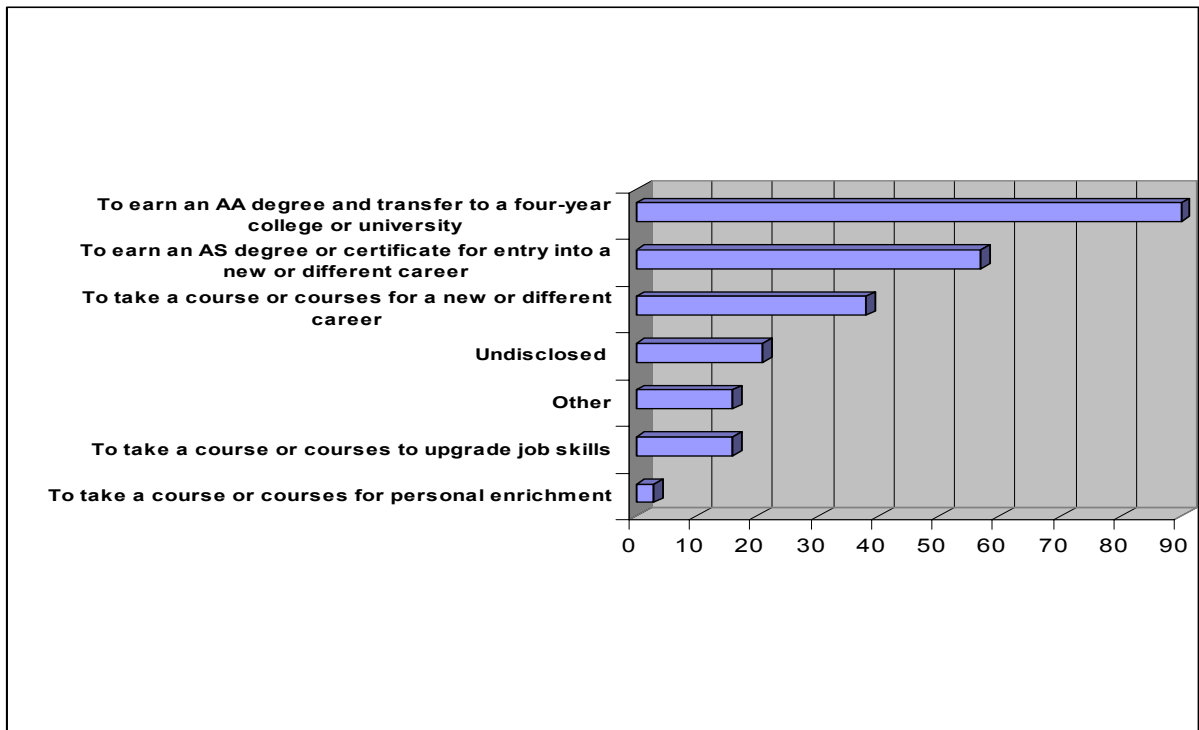
Time Planned to Take Classes

	Respondents	Percent
During the day	129	54%
In the evening	96	40%
On the weekend	5	2%
Undisclosed	11	5%
	241	100%
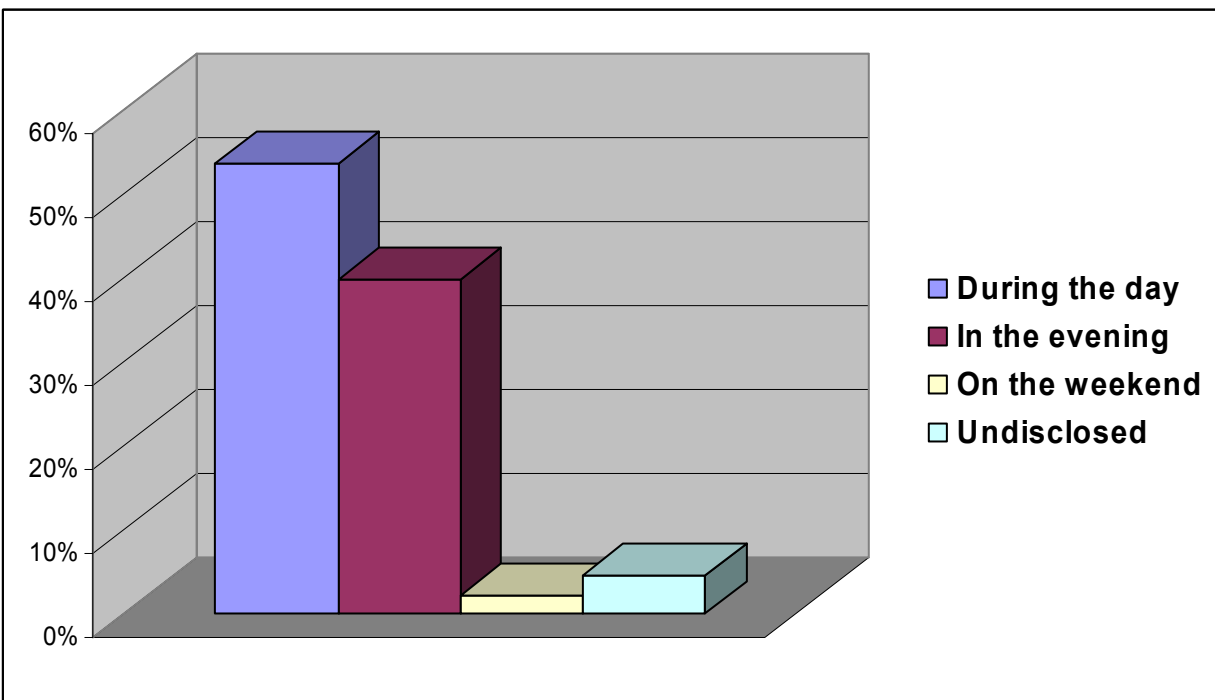
Time Preference

	Respondents	Percent
Weekday evenings	68	28%
Weekday mornings	67	28%
No Preference or Undisclosed	40	17%
Weekday afternoons	29	12%
Anytime during the week	28	12%
Anytime during the weekend	9	4%
	241	100%

- Weekday evenings
- Weekday mornings
- No Preference or Undisclosed
- Weekday afternoons
- Anytime during the week
- Anytime during the weekend
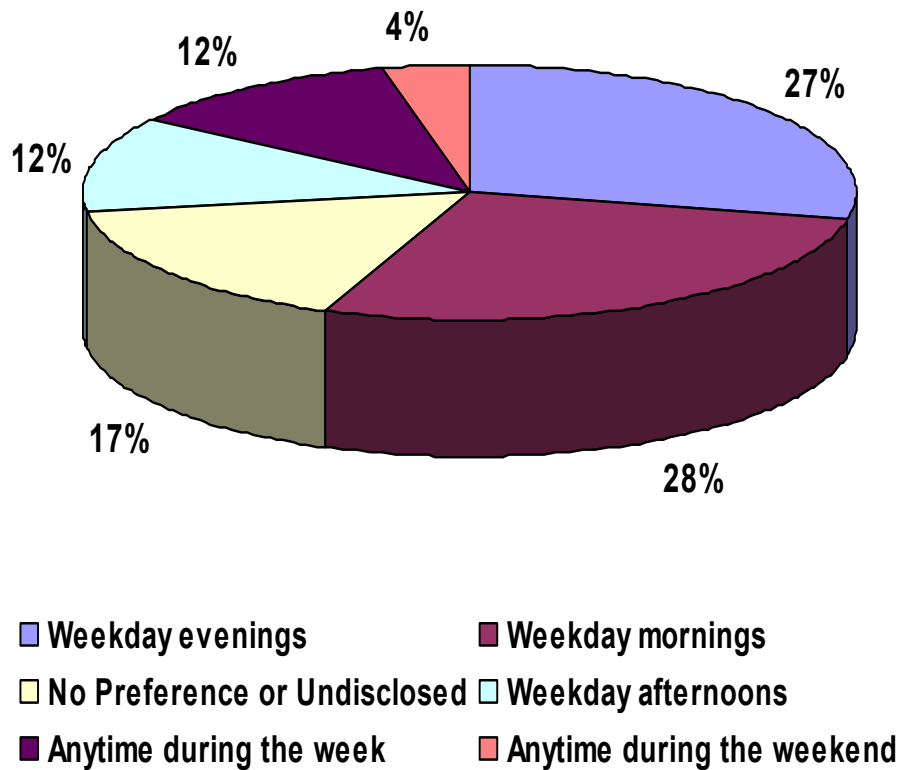
Enrollment Type

	Respondents	Percent
Primarily for credit - full time	105	44%
Primarily for credit - part time	102	42%
Primarily not for credit	14	6%
Undisclosed	20	8%
	241	100%

Legend:
- Primarily for credit - full time
- Primarily for credit - part time
- Primarily not for credit
- Undisclosed
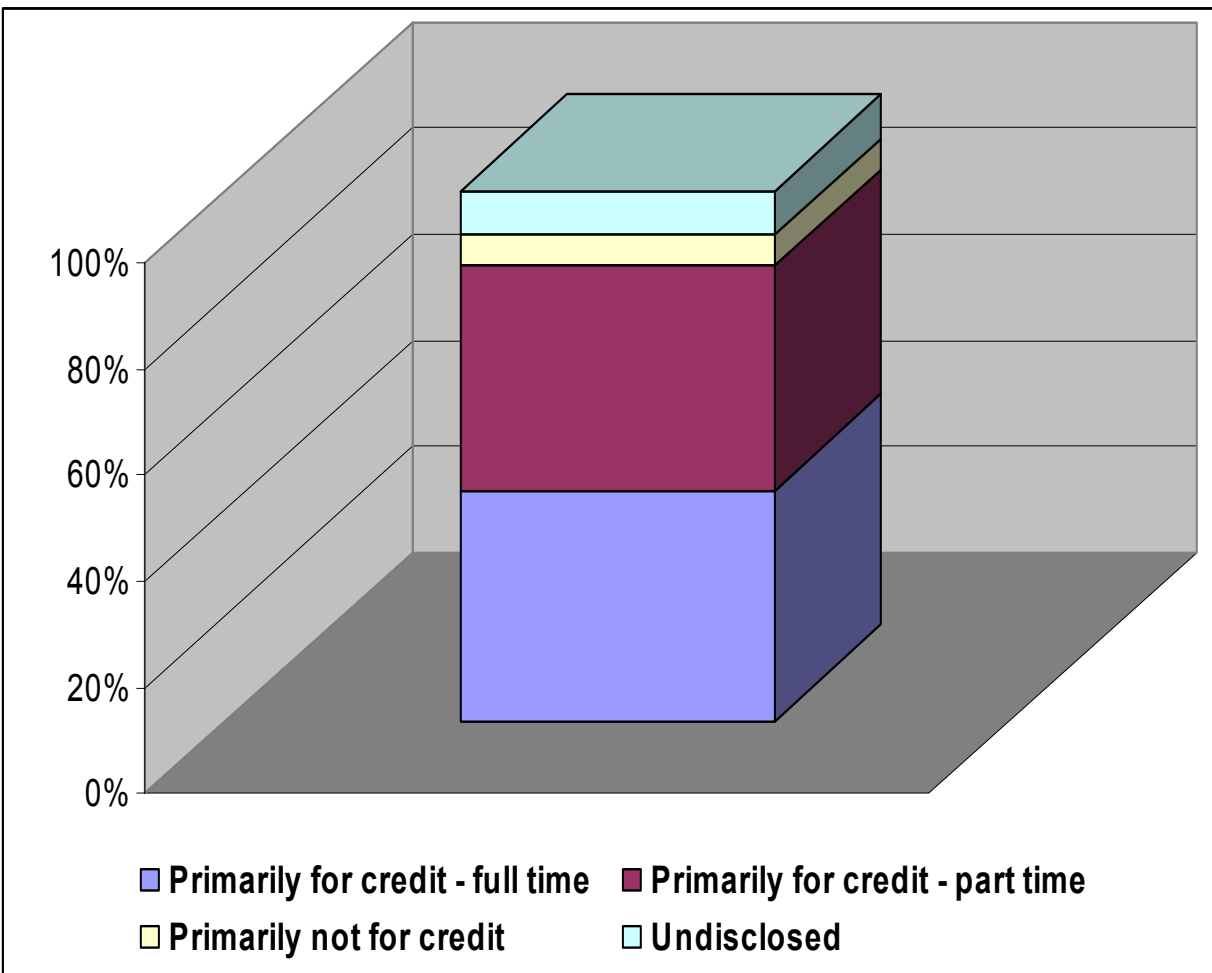
Part Time & Preference for Part Time	Respondents	Percent
Yes	52	22%
No	78	32%
Not Applicable	111	46%
	241	100%
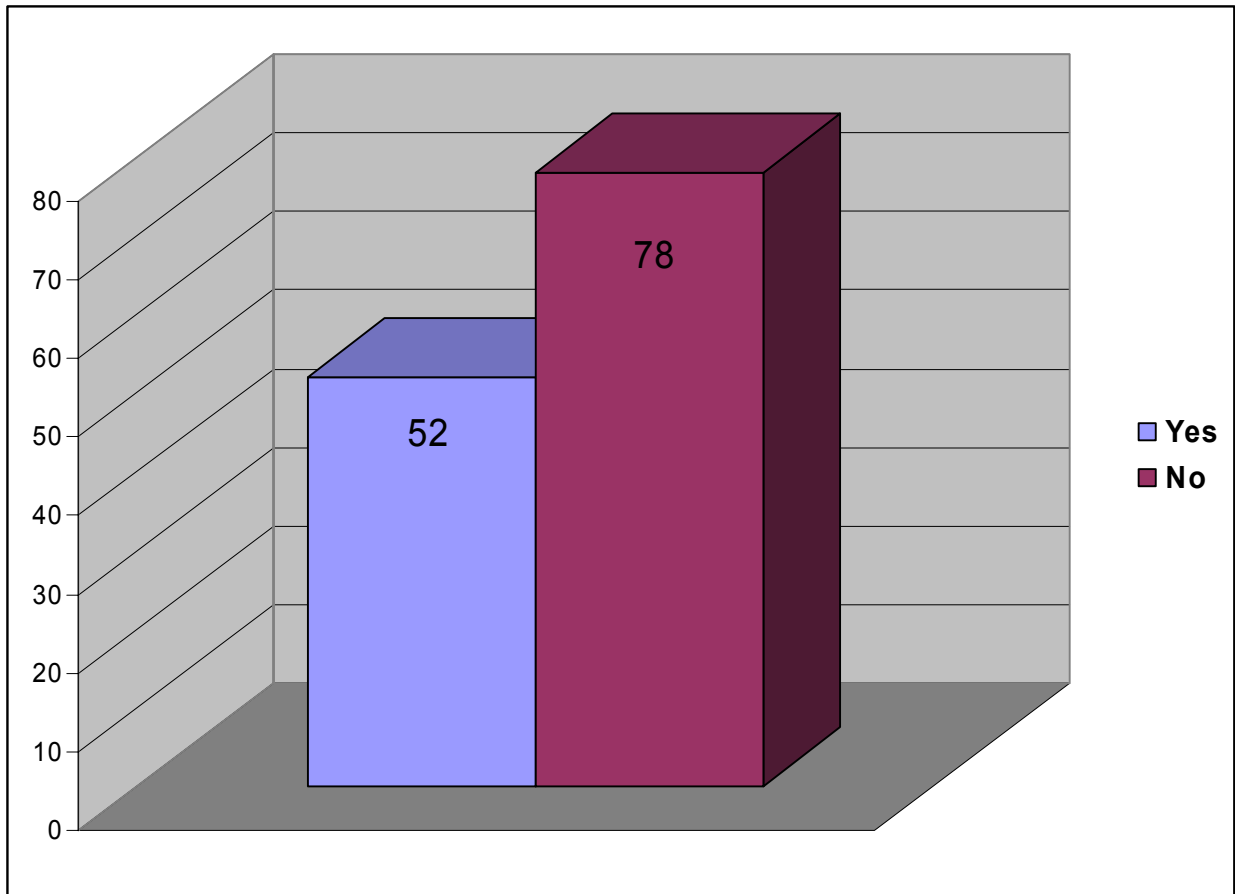
Circumstances Preventing Full Time and Wanted Full Time

	Respondents	Percent that indicated No
Job responsibilities/ schedule	78	100%
Finances	60	77%
Family responsibilities (including	33	42%
Other (Not Listed)	17	22%
Transportation	11	14%
Availability of SPC services	3	4%
Health or personal problems	2	3%
Availability of SPC Courses	1	1%
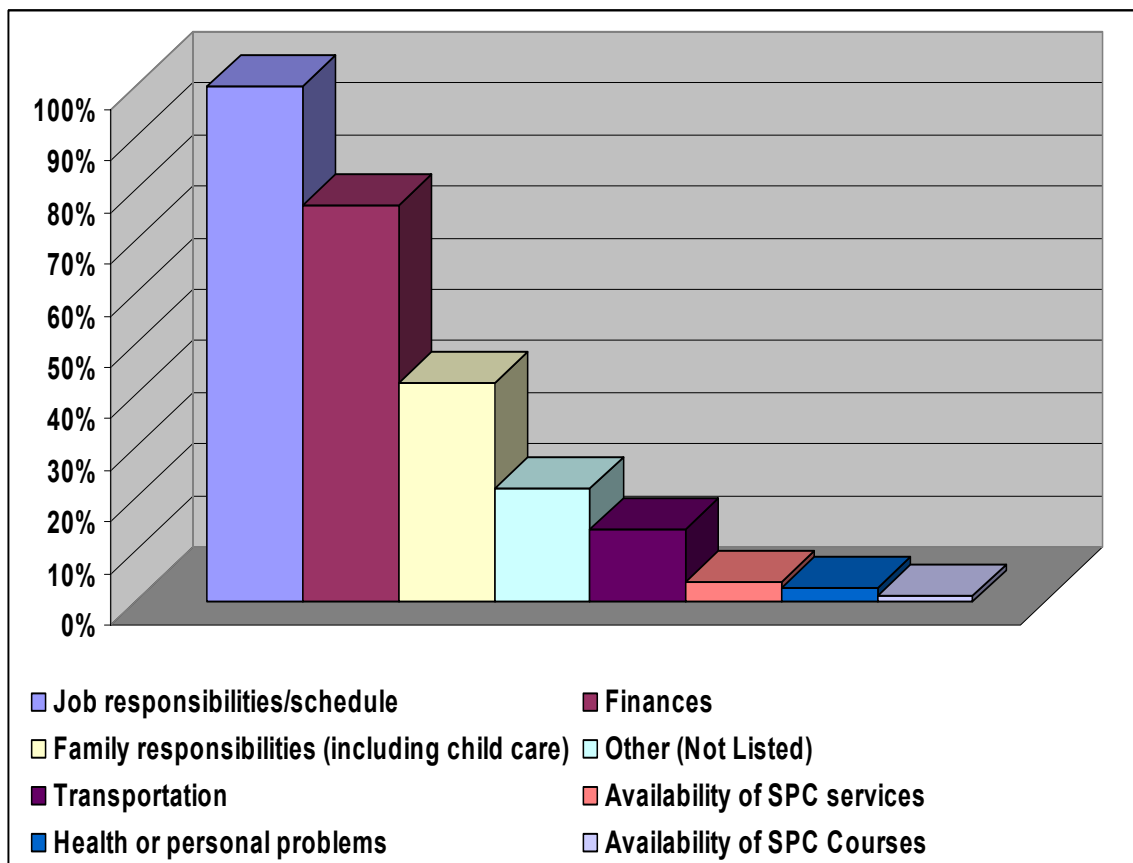
Prior Degree	Respondents	Percent
Yes	45	19%
No	190	79%
No Comment	6	2%
	241	100%

No Comment
2%

Yes
19%

No
79%
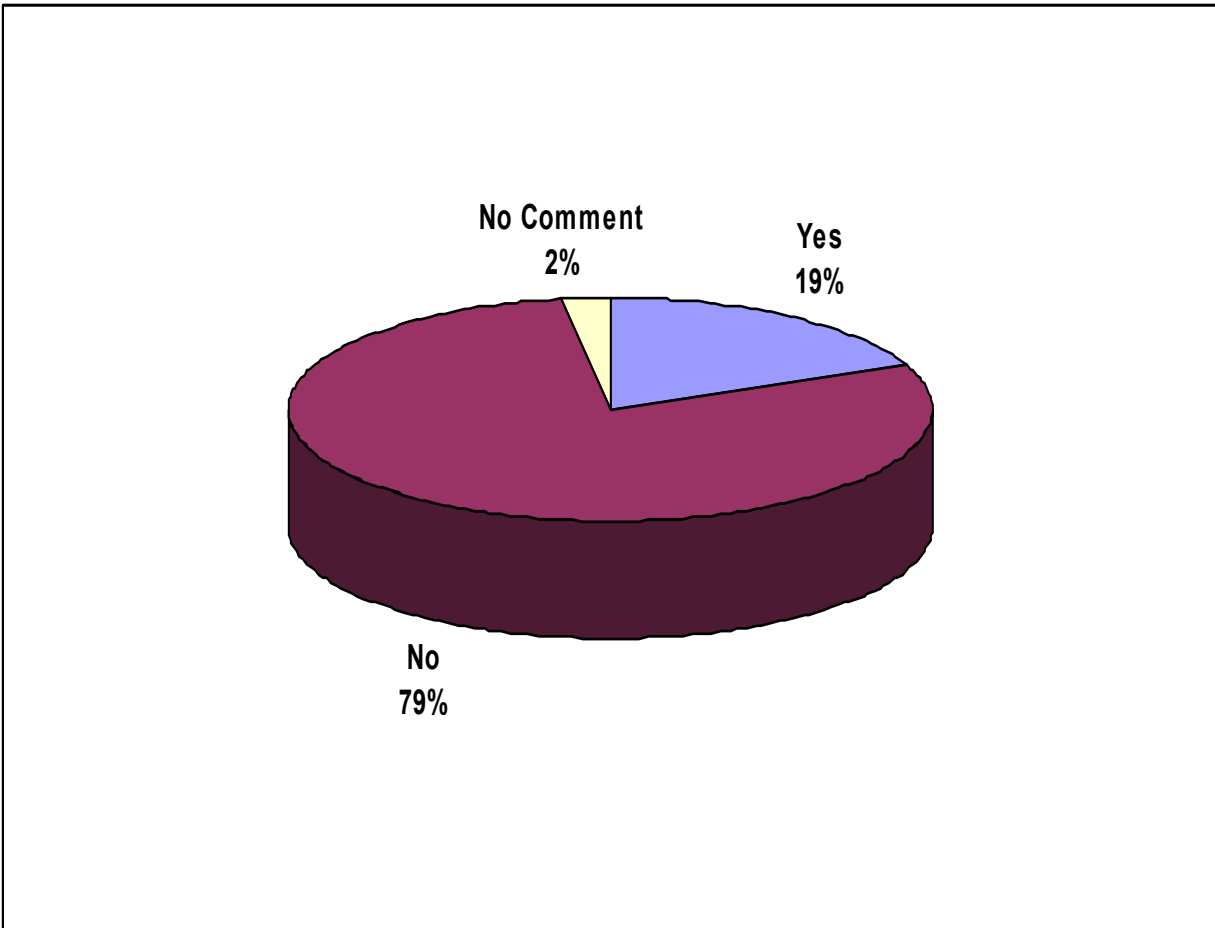
Degrees	Respondents	Percent
BA/ BS	17	7%
AS/ AAS	11	5%
AA	9	4%
Certificate	4	2%
MA/ MS	2	1%
Other	2	1%
Ed.D/ JD/ Ph.D	0	0%
	45	19%
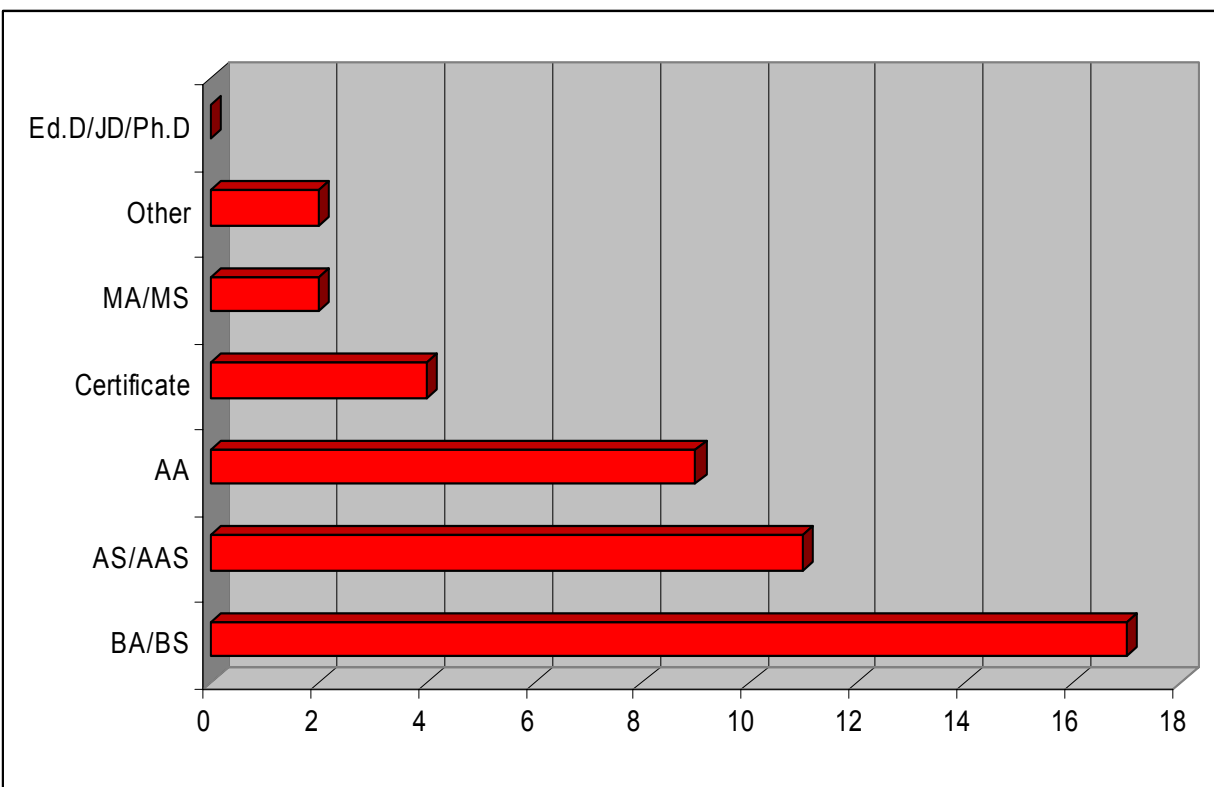
Working?

	Respondents	Percent
Yes	193	80%
No	40	17%
Undisclosed	8	3%
	241	100%
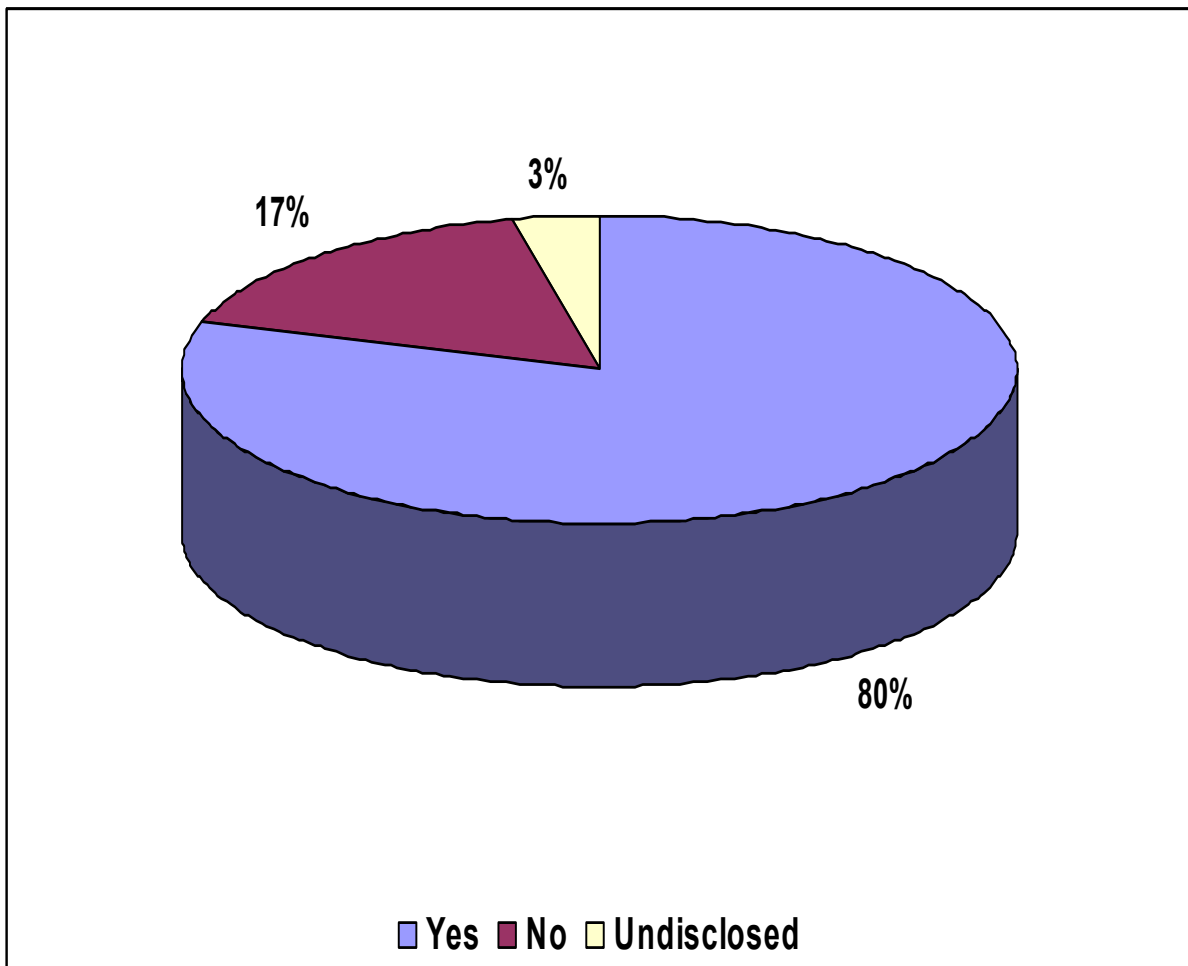
Hours to Work

	Respondents	Percent Those Working
15 or fewer	9	5%
16-30	66	34%
31-39	28	15%
40 or more	82	42%
Undisclosed	8	4%
	193	100%

Undisclosed 4%

15 or fewer 5%

31-39 15%

40 or more 42%

16-30 34%
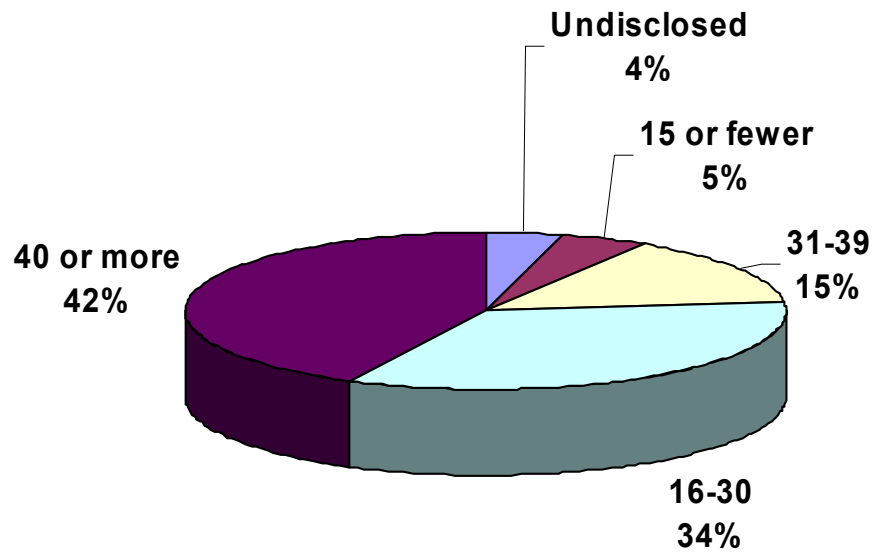
Section B – Factors Influencing the Decision to Attend SPC

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.

2004/2005   Responses

- Courses or Programs Offered
- Close to Home
- Cost
- Friends recommendation
- Academic Reputation

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

2003/2004   Responses

- Courses or Programs Offered
- Close to Home
- Cost
- Ease of Transfer to a State University
- Academic Reputation

2002/2003 Responses

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

Moreover, the three least listed factors have remained unchanged over the past three years and they are listed below.

**2002/2003, 2003/2004 and
2004/2005 Responses**

- Clubs or organizations
- Visit to high school by SPC staff
- Visit to place of employment by SPC staff

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 including "Other" responses where students wrote in factors not enumerated on the survey.

Factors Influencing the Decision to Attend SPC Table

Factors	Respondents	Percent of 241
Course(s) or program(s) offered	130	54%
Close to home	94	39%
Cost	49	20%
Friends recommendation	49	20%
Academic reputation	42	17%
Financial aid available	38	16%
Ease of transfer to a state university	38	16%
Parents/ family recommendation	35	15%
Close to work	29	12%
Employer recommendation	13	5%
High school counselor	9	4%
Athletics	8	3%
Music, art or theater	7	3%
Faculty or SPC staff	4	2%
Class size	4	2%
High school teacher	3	1%
Clubs or organizations	2	1%
Visit to high school by SPC staff	1	0%
Visit to place of employment by SPC staff	0	0%
Others	32	13%

Examples of "Others"

1. Accept and are determined to help students with disabilities
2. Court recommendation
3. I am interested in becoming a member of the Commotion Dance Company
4. It's in Florida
5. ITS THE CLOSEST SCHOOL TO WHERE I PLAN TO MOVE
6. MOTHER ATTENDED
7. my boyfriend
8. Need class credit to receive diploma from 4-yr university
9. on-line is convenient for me with my children, also a PHCC counselor recommended you
10. PTEC counselor
11. SPC is a better school than PHCC

Factors Influencing Your Decision

Legend:
- Visit to place of employment by SPC staff
- Visit to high school by SPC staff
- Clubs or organizations
- High school teacher
- Class size
- Faculty or SPC staff
- Music, art or theater
- Athletics
- High school counselor
- Employer recommendation
- Close to work
- Parents/family recommendation
- Ease of transfer to a state university
- Financial aid available
- Academic reputation
- Friends recommendation
- Cost
- Close to home
- Course(s) or program(s) offered

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
- Billboard
- St. Petersburg Times

The five least used methods of learning about the College from the survey's roster of categories were as follows:

- Posters
- Mall/Shopping Center Displays
- Tampa Tribune
- SPC Open Houses
- College Nights

The College's web site and television station are consistent year after year important tools for getting out the College's message but for the first time in many years "High School Presentations' moved to the second most important way students learned about the College. While the three methods listed on our least used list may need to be evaluated concerning their cost and benefit to College. A complete list of the methods used to learn about the College is provided in the following table and chart.
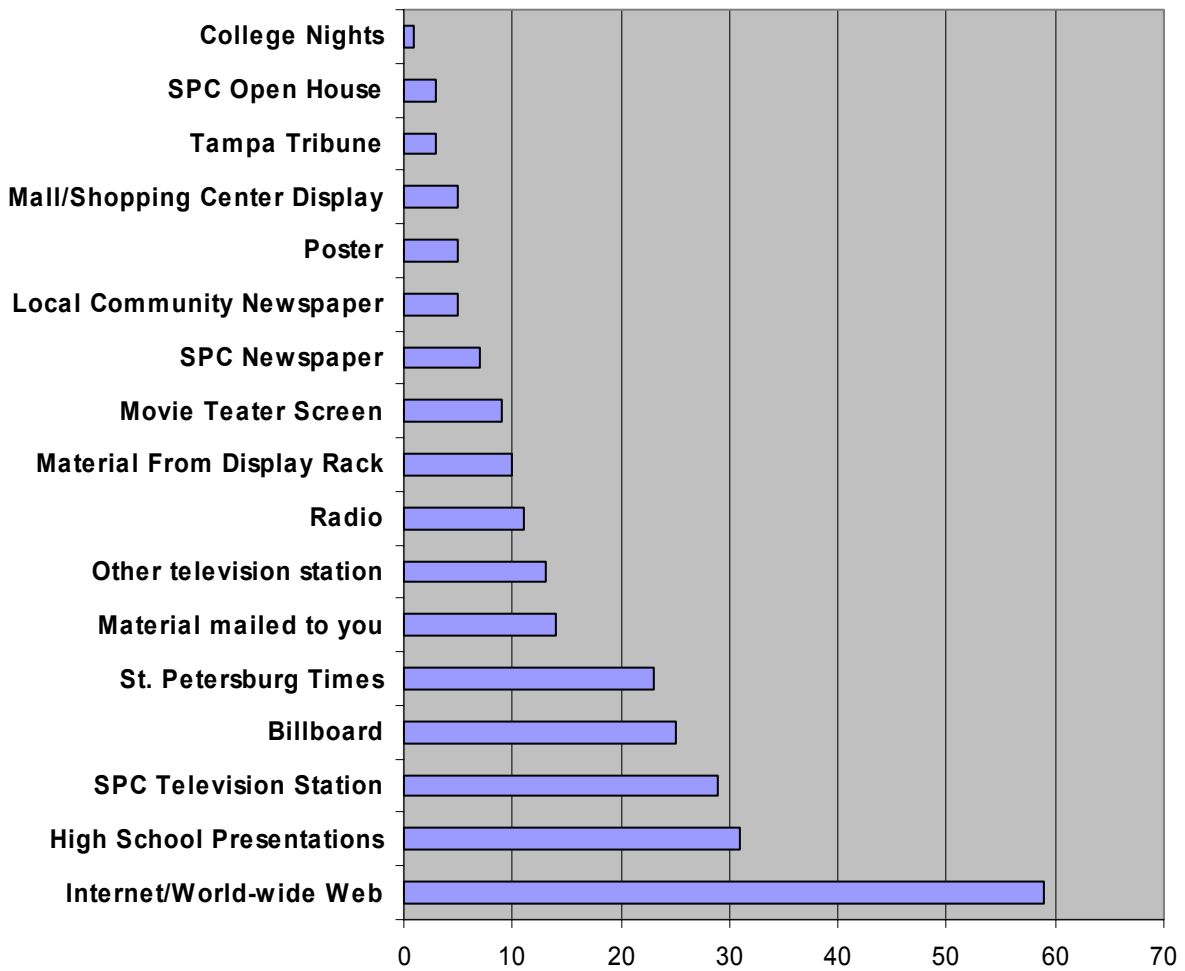
How Did You Learn About SPC Table

Sources/ Media/ Events	Respondents	Percent
Internet/ World-wide Web	59	25%
High School Presentations	31	13%
SPC Television Station	29	12%
Billboard	25	10%
St. Petersburg Times	23	10%
Material Mailed to You	14	6%
Other Television Station	13	5%
Radio	11	5%
Material from Display Rack	10	4%
Movie Theater Screen	9	4%
SPC Newspaper	7	3%
Local Community Newspaper	5	2%
Poster	5	2%
Mall/ shopping Center Display	5	2%
Tampa Tribune	3	1%
SPC Open House	3	1%
College Nights	1	0%
Others	74	31%

Examples of "Others"

1. FRIENDS AND FAMILY
2. Just living in the area, and high school.
3. Word of Mouth from someone in the field of Dental Hygiene saying this is the best school to attend.
4. Praise from students who attend SPC
5. PTEC in Clearwater

Sources/Media/Events to Learn About SPC

Source	Value
College Nights	1
SPC Open House	3
Tampa Tribune	3
Mall/Shopping Center Display	5
Poster	5
Local Community Newspaper	5
SPC Newspaper	7
Movie Teater Screen	9
Material From Display Rack	10
Radio	11
Other television station	13
Material mailed to you	14
St. Petersburg Times	23
Billboard	25
SPC Television Station	29
High School Presentations	31
Internet/World-wide Web	59

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
- Career Counseling
- Library
- Career Assessment

The five judged the least important were:

- Help With the Use of Computers
- Help With Reading Skills
- Volunteer Experiences
- Student Publications
- Student Activities

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 (Importance)	Mean
Academic advising	6.13
Financial aid	5.78
Career counseling	5.72
Library	5.55
Career assessment	5.47
Job placement	5.23
Access to computers	5.10
Tutoring	5.05
Math Tutoring	4.92
Study skills	4.55
Time management	4.51
Test anxiety	4.47
Oral communications Tutoring	4.35
Writing Tutoring	4.32
Use of computer	4.19
Reading Tutoring	4.09
Volunteer	4.07
Student publications	3.93
Student activities	3.68

Expected Importance of College Tutoring (Help Areas)

The table below separates the specific tutoring areas from the other College offices/services 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
Math	4.92
Study skills	4.55
Time management	4.51
Test anxiety	4.47
Oral communications	4.35
Writing	4.32
Use of computer	4.19
Reading	4.09

Section E - Effectiveness of Contacts

On the Entering Student Survey, students were asked to rate how effective they judged each of five methods of contacting them. 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 (5.04) 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" was rated the lowest.

Effectiveness of Contacts Table

Contacts	
Contact by SPC during campus visit	5.50
Information Content of College publication	5.47
Clarity of College publication	5.44
Telephone Contact with SPC	5.26
Visit by SPC Staff to your School	5.04

Conclusion

Students entering St. Petersburg College programs encompass a broad range of age categories with half the respondents to this survey being over the age of 24 years. Women continue to maintain a large majority of respondents with a sixty five percent of those that identified their gender being female. Seventy one percent of the responding students live in Pinellas County while an additional twenty five percent reside in Florida mostly in neighboring counties. Only four percent live outside of Florida. The ethnic background of the responding students has a greater proportion of minorities than Pinellas County as a whole with sixty five percent reporting their ethnicity as white, twenty one percent as black and seven 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. Only nineteen percent of the in-coming students have any kind of college degree. Students are split about evenly between planning to take classes during the weekday morning or evening. All others time are far less popular. Only a few 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. Just forty four percent of the incoming students who completed the survey 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 one fourth of SPC students actually do. Of those that are part-time students but wish to be full-time, the circumstances that most often prevent them 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". On the other hand, clubs and organizations at the College and visit by SPC staff to their high school or their place of employment were not very important decision factors.

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. However, it appears that "Posters", "Mall/Shopping Center Displays" "Tampa Tribune" "SPC Open Houses" and "College Nights" do not have a large impact on our students learning about the College.

When asked "How important do you expect each of the following offices/services to be to you?" students responded that "Academic Advising", "Financial Aid" and "Career Counseling" were the most important. "Student Activity" was relatively unimportant to the respondents.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of the five contact methods all received marks above (5.04) 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.