Research & Analytical Services
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Research Briefs

KEY FINDINGS

- When asked if they would hire STC graduates, if they could, all of the employers responded "Yes".
- "Ability to work as part of a team" has the highest mean grade with 3.65 out of the highest possible 4.00, whereas "managerial skills" has the lowest with 2.93.
- BAT graduates score significantly higher (p-value<.05) on managerial and leadership skills compared to other graduates.
- 100% of competencies graded C or better and 94% B or better.

IMPLICATIONS

For Practice:

- Calibrate sets of qualities/ skills to more closely measure each type of degree (Bachelor, Associate, Certificate).
- Consider curricular changes to emphasize speaking skills.

For Policy:

- Administer the Employer Satisfaction Survey annually; analyze trends.

For Research:

- Triangulate with qualitative studies to recognize the praises and concerns of employers regarding STC graduates in more detail.
- Increase the sample size in an effort to amplify the generalizability of the findings in upcoming years.

Employer Satisfaction with South Texas College (STC) Graduates

Graduate Employer Satisfaction Survey 2009

The Employer Satisfaction Survey is one of the research tools STC utilizes periodically to measure and continuously improve its performance related to skill acquisition of its graduates through the programs they attend. Data are collected from employers whose contact information is voluntarily provided by STC graduates in the Graduate Follow-Up Survey or from employers serving on program advisory boards. The objective is to identify employers' perceptions regarding STC graduates to improve existing or develop new policies to match those skills with the workforce needs.

Background

STC's mission includes the aspiration to provide its graduates with the skills to enhance the quality of their lives. As part of an effort to measure how successful STC is in reaching this broad goal, graduates are periodically surveyed to find out how prepared they feel for their present and future endeavors within their careers. It is only natural to parallel this effort by also surveying their employers to investigate how they rate their employees who have received a college education from various STC programs. This is precisely the objective of this research. In the light of the findings of this study, STC has a better knowledge of its graduates' qualities and skills as perceived by their employers. This knowledge can turn into necessary action to better prepare STC students for contemporary job requirements and to align programs better with the human resource needs of the employers in the region.

Purpose of Study

This study was designed to establish the extent of employer satisfaction with the qualities and skills of the STC graduates; moreover it reports the findings of the analyses of data from 2009 Graduate Employee Satisfaction Survey for this purpose.

Methodology

In a recent sample study, 376 of 704 December 2008 graduates were sampled to be contacted for a Graduate Follow-Up survey. Out of 184 who provided responses in telephone interviews, 92 also agreed to disclose contact information about their employers (supervisor's name, phone number, and such). Additionally, 43 employers whose contact information was retrieved from the Bachelor of Applied technology (BAT) Exit Survey were included, resulting in a total pool of 135 employers. Since STC is a four year college, managerial and leadership skills which are expected of Bachelor degree graduates were added to the historical list of competencies to be measured (See Table 2). Several companies/supervisors were mentioned two or more times but surveyed only once since they were not asked to grade specific STC graduates but all employed by them overall. A few employers were not available despite repeated attempts. In the end, Research and Analytical Services (RAS) staff was able to collect data, after several waves of calls, from 35 employers. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and means) were computed and are presented in this brief, along with the discussion of the findings.

Research Questions

The specific research questions explored in this study are:

- How satisfied are employers with the quality and skill levels of STC graduates?
- Which qualities or skills of STC graduates are rated higher and which ones are

Employer Satisfaction with STC Graduates cont.)

rated lower by their employers?

Findings

For the categorical items in the survey, percent frequency distributions were used to organize the responses to the questions (See Table 1). On the other hand, for the grades (A through F) that the employers assigned to various qualities and skills of the STC graduates they are employing or have employed in the past, both percent frequencies and means (on a corresponding 0 to 4 scale) were utilized (See Table 2).

Table 1 - Employers of STC Graduates

Do you currently employ any STC graduates?	Count	%
Yes	28	80
No, but employed STC graduates in the past	7	20
TOTAL	35	100
Degree program of employed STC graduates:		
BAT	12	34
Other	23	66
TOTAL	35	100
If you could, would you hire STC graduates in the future?		
Yes	35	100
No	0	0
TOTAL	35	100

Overview

80% of the survey respondents were employing STC graduates at the time the survey was administered, and the remaining 20% had employed them in the past. 34% of the employers were supervising STC graduates from the BAT programs while the remaining 66% were supervising graduates holding degrees from other programs (nine with Associate of Arts, four with Associate of Applied Science, and 10 with Certificate degrees). It is overwhelmingly pleasing that, when asked if they would hire STC graduates, if they could, all of the employers responded "Yes".

Qualities and Skills

Based on the summaries of the grades that the respondents gave for the qualities and skills to their employees who were STC graduates, it can be seen that the results are generally positive with "Ability to work as part of a team" receiving the most A's (68%). For seven out of 16 qualities/skills, the cumulative percentage of A and B grades is above 90% (ability to work as part of a team, listening skills, reading skills, overall job-related knowledge, overall job-related skills, mathematical skills, and ability to utilize technology to meet organizational needs) whereas the lowest cumulative percent of A + B grades (72%) is for managerial skills.

Table 2 - Qualities and Skills of STC Graduates as Rated by Their Employers

	A	B	Mean	N
Ability to work as part of a team	67.6%	29.4%	3.65	34
Listening skills	57.1%	34.3%	3.49	35
Reading skills	52.9%	41.2%	3.47	34
Overall job-related knowledge	51.4%	45.7%	3.46	35
Overall computer skills	53.1%	34.4%	3.41	32
Overall job-related skills	40.0%	57.1%	3.37	35
Critical thinking/problem-solving skills	44.1%	44.1%	3.32	34
Mathematical skills	34.5%	62.1%	3.31	29
Overall job-related experience	42.9%	42.9%	3.29	35
Ability to utilize technology to meet organizational needs	31.4%	65.7%	3.29	35
Writing skills	51.5%	27.3%	3.27	33
Ability to develop strategies	42.4%	42.4%	3.27	33
*Leadership skills	44.1%	38.2%	3.24	34
Oral Presentation skills	38.2%	47.1%	3.24	34
Time Management skills	40.0%	37.1%	3.17	35
*Managerial skills	31.0%	41.4%	2.93	29

*Bachelor core competencies

The qualities/skills are listed based on the mean grade (0-4 scale, 0 corresponding to F and 4 corresponding to A) in descending order. Ability to work as part of a team has the highest mean with 3.65, followed by listening skills, reading skills, overall-job related knowledge, and overall computer skills. The lowest mean (2.93) belongs to managerial skills trailed by time management skills, oral presentation skills, and leadership skills. BAT graduates score significantly higher (p-value<.05) on managerial and leadership skills compared to other graduates, as anticipated.

In summary, qualities and skills of STC graduates were seen as generally satisfactory by their employers. While there is always room for improvement, it is essential to know that all employers who responded stated that they would continue hiring STC graduates in the future, if they could.

Implications for Further Research and Practice

It is of great magnitude to find from the survey results that STC graduates are well regarded by their employers with respect to the qualities and skills they bring to their workplace. It is also important to notice the areas where there is room for improvement. For example, important comments brought up by some of the respondents show that STC graduates are "well prepared", "energetic", "responsible", and have "good computer skills", but they can at times get "intimidated", "nervous", or "shy". Recently, similar CCSSE Survey findings showed that graduates' perceptions of their competencies in speaking was lower than any other area. Oral presentation skills receive the third lowest mean grade in this study as well. This finding of commonality regarding speaking or oral presentation should be studied more in depth with perhaps greater emphasis on this competency added to the curriculum.