

# Research Briefs

## KEY FINDINGS

- Students were satisfied with college faculty including: qualifications of faculty, quality of instructors, and the helpfulness of faculty.
- Improvements needed regarding faculty included: having faculty better address the needs of students with learning disabilities, finding ways to improve faculty communication skills to ensure that students understand.

## IMPLICATIONS

### For Practice:

- Continue to hire high quality, qualified members to be part of the faculty.
- Better train faculty on working with students with learning disabilities.

### For Policy:

- Review the system by which the college better addresses student complaints regarding instructors.

### For Research:

- Continued inquiry for enhanced understanding and opportunities for addressing student concerns.
- Triangulation of data with other findings from quantitative survey data.



## Student Satisfaction: Faculty

### A 2007 SWOT Study

In the 2006-2007 academic year, South Texas College (STC) conducted a SWOT Analysis as a part of its strategic planning in order to evaluate the institution's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. During the course of focus groups conducted as part of this study students expressed their opinions in regards to STC faculty. Through the information gathered it is apparent that while most students praise STC regarding the accessibility and quality of faculty, they also offer feedback for improvement.

#### Background

As an academic institution that strives to provide a better quality of life for communities throughout the Rio Grande Valley by meeting the diverse educational and workforce needs of the people of Hidalgo and Starr counties, STC is dedicated to continually improving how it functions as an institution of higher learning. In order to continue moving in this direction STC believes it is

important to examine student attitudes towards various aspects of college life. This particular brief focuses on student opinions in regards to the accessibility and quality of STC faculty.

#### Purpose of Study

(Please see Research Brief: South Texas College Study of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Vol. 2, Issue 1)



#### Methodology

Data collection involved 13 student focus groups which took place in November and December 2006 on the Pecan, Starr, and Mid-Valley campuses. The recruitment for these focus groups involved a small financial incen-

tive (\$50) for participating student organizations.

#### Research Questions

Although students were asked a variety of questions in relation

to the SWOT analysis, issues regarding accessibility and quality of faculty can be attributed to questions asked in regards to strengths in STC's competitive and unique characteristics,

community image, and philosophy, culture, attitude and/or core values as well questions regarding weaknesses in instructional programs, morale, commitment, and personnel. Students were also asked to comment on what they found "vulnerable" about STC. Gen-

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eral questions were asked about how the college could improve, advantages to attending STC, what students enjoyed about being a part of the student body, what they disliked about the college, and how student needs can better be met. The student comments were shared widely with administrators for strategy development in planning.

#### Key Findings

Comments provided by students in terms of accessibility and quality of faculty at STC show that more students have positive opinions about the faculty than they do negative opinions. The students indicate that they are pleased with the “quality of the instructors,” that they find the instructors “helpful,” and that instructors are “qualified.”

There were very few complaints in terms of faculty at STC. The problems that were voiced included complaints about difficulty in understanding some instructors, lack of empathy towards students with learning disabilities, and complaints about instructors seeming to go unnoticed by the college.

Despite this the majority of the comments made by students indicate that they are pleased with the level of faculty at the college and are satisfied with the way instruc-

tors interact with students.

#### Implications for Further Research

While the data collected from students as part of the SWOT study in terms of accessibility and quality of the faculty at STC offers us a preview of what students appreciate about the instructors at STC as well as areas in which faculty could improve, a more widespread study that concentrates specifically on this subject could provide additional and more thorough insight on the subject.

Triangulation of this data with quantitative survey data would offer a mixed methods approach to further understanding that would be useful in learning more about areas in which the college needs to concentrate to improve the way students feel about STC faculty.