Research Briefs

KEY FINDINGS

- Students were satisfied with various college facilities including: technological services provided by the library and other resources such as availability of reserved texts and study rooms.

- Improvements need to be made in different areas including: the number of study rooms available and customer service.

IMPLICATIONS

For Practice:

- Better training of library staff in customer service areas.

- Continue looking into new technological resources in library services for continued growth in the future.

- Expansion of Reserved Text availability.

- Additional space for group work.

For Policy:

- Continued expansion of library system to include more study rooms.

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: Libraries

A 2007 SWOT Study

In the 2006-2007 academic year, South Texas College (STC) conducted a SWOT Analysis as a part of it 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 library services. Through the information gathered it is apparent that while students praise STC regarding many aspects of the libraries, they also provide further suggestions 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 particular, STC Library Services supports the College's education mission by providing access to information resources and instruction in information seeking skills to STC students, faculty, and community members. 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 STC library services.

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 incentive ($50) for participating student organizations.

Research Questions

Although students were asked a variety of questions in relation to the SWOT analysis, issues regarding library services can be attributed to questions asked in regards to strengths in marketing, technology, and STC's competitive and unique characteristics, as well questions regarding weaknesses in systems, resources, and personnel. Students were also asked to comment on what they found "vulnerable" about STC. General 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.

Although students were not specifically asked about library services, this study can answer questions about how STC can improve its library services to better serve the student population.

Key Findings

Students expressed general praise of the library and articulated satisfaction with a number of STC library services including technology, services, and hours of service.

Technology
Students expressed overall satisfaction with the technology available in and utilized by the library. In particular, students praised STC use of the World-Cat, a program which connects

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the library to the world's largest network of library content and services. Additionally, students were pleased with the availability of computer labs in the library.

Reserved Textbooks
The SWOT indicated that students found the library's system for reserving textbooks to be helpful. Although appreciative of this service, the study also indicated student desire for more textbooks to be made available as part of this service.

Service Hours
Several students commented on their appreciation of the library's service hours.

Study Rooms
Although the availability of study rooms is appreciated, students have indicated that the number of rooms available for this purpose is

insufficient. They have expressed a desire for more of these rooms since supply is not meeting demand. Students also indicated that procedures regarding the use of study rooms are not always followed and lone students are occupying these spaces which are meant for group work.

Staff
Students expressed concern about the library staff indicating that they need to be "nicer" and "more friendly." Other comments suggest that staff needs to improve the way in which they enforce library rules and regulations concerning the noise level in the library and the fairness or equity in the process with which access to study rooms is distributed.

Implications for Further Research

While the data collected from students as part of the SWOT study in terms of library services at STC offers us a preview of what students appreciate about the services provided to them as well as to what needs to be improved, 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 library services.