The market research sought to determine the following: Those who indicated that they planned on attending college in the next two years were randomly selected to take part in the research. Those who were less likely to indicate that Penn State Berks offers baccalaureate degrees than acknowledging that the College offered the first two years of a four-year degree or associate degree. Various factors tip the scale when a student is considering college. Undeniably, cost is a determining attribute in the college selection process for both traditional and non-traditional students. Eighty-six (86.1%) percent of the traditional and eighty-eight percent (88.4%) of the non-traditional respondents stated that cost is a very important factor in the college selection process. Respondents also indicated that the availability of financial aid (82.9%) was an important factor in the college selection process. Individuals aspire to continue their education, but they are sensitive to tuition cost and require educational funding to aid in the process. The location was identified as the second most important factor in the college selection process for non-traditional students. The location of Penn State Berks appeals to non-traditional students, ages 24-64, who are more likely to have various obligations like a family to take care of, a job, and a commute to the campus. Almost two-thirds of the traditional (62.5%) and three-fourths of the non-traditional (74.6%) respondents stated they heard about Penn State Berks via a friend or relative. Non-traditional students indicated they heard about Penn State Berks through current students (38.2%) and local newspapers (33.6%).

"Anticipated is that the results will provide informed decisions about degree offerings and marketing to potential students.”
In spring 2008, Penn State Berks joined the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE). The CSRDE maintains the largest national retention and graduation rate database. Penn State Berks is the first Penn State campus to join CSRDE.

“The purpose of membership is to provide us with better comparative data and the ability to do peer analyses and benchmarking.”

Hosted at the University of Oklahoma, the CSRDE program began in 1994 with the help of a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant. Currently, it is the only national source for retention and graduation rate information.

As a CSRDE member, Penn State Berks receives the retention and graduation rates of all participating institutions. In addition, the information is aggregated by SAT/ACT selectivity, private/public institutions, level of degrees conferred and Carnegie Classification.

Dr. Mary Lou D’Allegro, Senior Director, Planning Research and Assessment Office.

Penn State Berks will also participate in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Retention Project. Almost one-third (31.8%) of new students in fall 2007 at Penn State Berks were STEM majors. About twenty-two percent (21.7%) of all students are STEM majors. Because many students are opting to finish their STEM degree at Penn State Berks, it is important to track the success of those STEM programs.

The 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, Building on 50 Years of Excellence, was endorsed by the Faculty Senate on February 11, 2008. It is comprised of the following:

- Student Learning and Academic Excellence
- Enrollment Management
- Diversity & Sense of Community
- Community Outreach and
- Research & Scholarship

The planning document is near completion. The College’s assessment plan, budget and enrollment projections will be added to the 2008-2013 strategic planning document by April 2008.

All told, over 150 faculty, students and staff participated in the plan’s development, commented on the plan or provided feedback via surveys or focus groups. “...At Penn State Berks we actually believe that our success rests with the strength of the whole team. By bringing in a large number of faculty, staff, students and community members we have the benefit of their collective wisdom as well as the community buy-in to help us reach our goals.” reinforces Dr. Susan Phillips Speece, Chancellor.

In fact, preliminary feedback indicates that the development of the 2008-2013 strategic plan was perceived as a process that included the benefit of their collective wisdom as well as the community buy-in to help us reach our goals. “...At Penn State Berks we actually believe that our success rests with the strength of the whole team. By bringing in a large number of faculty, staff, students and community members we have the benefit of their collective wisdom as well as the community buy-in to help us reach our goals.” reinforces Dr. Susan Phillips Speece, Chancellor.

In 2008-2009, each unit will be asked to devise an area strategic plan that aligns with Building on 50 Years of Excellence. Also, specific plan “stretch” targets will be determined. Most importantly, the implementation of the 2008-2013 strategic plan will be under way.

A copy of the Building on 50 Years of Excellence, 2008-2013 Strategic Plan has been posted to the PRA web site. In addition, a Chancellor’s podcast is scheduled to be recorded on March 18, 2008 to reflect on the planning process at Penn State Berks.