

Plan — Research — Assess!



Introduction

Welcome to the third issue of **Plan — Research — Assess!** This newsletter is published by the Planning, Research, and Assessment Office (PRA) at Penn State Berks.

The purpose of the PRA newsletter is to disseminate information on current assessment, institutional research, and planning projects at the College.

The PRA office is grateful for the student workers who make the PRA Newsletter possible. Stefanie Galeano, senior Professional Writing major and student worker in the PRA Office, is responsible for design, content, and editing of this newsletter.

NEW: Go directly to articles by clicking on titles below *Inside This Issue*.

Comments on the newsletter? Email: PRA@psu.edu

Inside This Issue

2007 Market Research Results	1
PRA To Conduct BBEC Survey	1
Data Warehouse Update	1
Berks Joins CSRDE	2
Strategic Plan Update	2
CHEM 110 Hybrid Learning Project	2
Look For...	2
Campus Stat	2

Contact Information

Dr. Mary Lou D'Allegro
Senior Director
610.396.6389
mad23@psu.edu



2007 Market Research Results

Market research helps an organization understand the perceptions of a specific audience. By capturing these perceptions, an institution can gain a better sense of the needs and expectations of the community.

In fall 2007, ICR, an external market research firm, was hired to conduct several hundred phone interviews. Six hundred Berks County and Lehigh Valley residents were randomly selected to take part in the research.

Those who indicated that they planned on attending college in the next two years were included in the study. The participants were categorized as traditional, students ages 16-23, and non-traditional, students ages 24-64.

The market research sought to determine the following:

- Attributes considered when selecting a college (ex. Cost, location)
- Familiarity with Penn State Berks and several other Pennsylvania colleges
- General perceptions about both colleges
- Factors that influenced awareness of Penn State Berks
- Enrollment predilection based on degree program offerings and
- Preferred time of day to attend classes

“Anticipated is that the results will provide informed decisions about degree offerings and marketing to potential students.”

Results indicated that both traditional (43.4%) and non-traditional (41.0%) respondents were more likely to attend Penn State Berks if a baccalaureate degree in *Communications Arts & Sciences* was offered at the campus.

Both traditional and non-traditional respondents 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%).



PRA to Conduct BBEC Survey



Penn State Berks has been asked by the Berks Business & Education Coalition (BBEC) to conduct a survey of all faculty of the five colleges of Berks County: Albright College, Alvernia College, Kutztown University, Penn State Berks, and Reading Area Community College. PRA has been asked to take the lead in the project's implementation.

As part of the BBEC Higher Education/ Basic Education Initiative, the survey project will help to determine the extent recent Berks County high school graduates are prepared for college. Faculty will rate college readiness of new students in three content areas: Mathematics, English Composition, and Chemistry.

Entry Placement Tests and first semester GPA will also be compiled by each college and for each Berks County high school.

Conceived by the Chairman of Meridan Bankcorp in 1989, the mission of BBEC is to coordinate the resources of business with education to improve student

competency.¹ Other BBEC initiatives include

- Career Pathways
- SAS inSchool Curriculum
- Pathways & Educational Improvement
- Tax Credit Program

Penn State Berks is an integral part of the BBEC. Dr. Susan Phillips Speece, Chancellor, serves on the Board of Directors and Tish Jespen, Career Services Coordinator, is a member of the BBEC.

¹ Berks Business & Education Coalition. (2008). *Index*. Available: <http://www.berksbec.org/index.html>

Data Warehouse Update

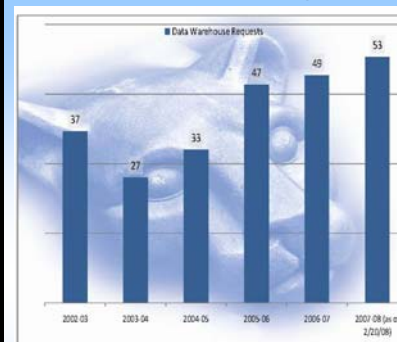


Figure 1: Number of Data Warehouse Requests

Data Warehouse Requests for 2007-08 to date have increased by eight percent compared to all of 2006-2007.

Berks Joins CSRDE



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.

Penn State Berks is a unique Penn State college campus. Hence, comparisons to the other Penn State college campuses are not always appropriate or helpful. “CSRDE will provide us with better comparative data and the ability to conduct peer analyses and benchmarking studies,”

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.

Strategic Plan Update

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 a wide variety of campus constituents.

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 underway.

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.

Chem 110 Hybrid Learning Project

The Planning, Research, and Assessment Office conducted a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the Chem 110 hybrid course. Developed by Dr. Ike Shibley and Dr. Katie Amaral, the Chem 110 hybrid course takes advantage of several innovative learning technologies. John Shank, Director, Center for Learning and Teaching, Bo Zigner, Instructional Designer; and Mary Ann Mengel, Multimedia Specialist assisted in the development.

“This study shows how a positive impact can be made when Planning, Research, and Assessment works cooperatively with faculty in assessing new classroom technologies,” says Stefanie Kerns, Statistical Data Analyst.

The Chem 110 hybrid course has integrated learning technologies to enhance course content, assignments and feedback. Known as the “hybrid learning project,” Dr. Ike Shibley and Dr. Katie Amaral have used technologies like the interactive clicker software to better assess student learning and understanding of key topics.

Other technologies incorporated into the course include expanded ANGEL functionality, online quizzes and various online learning aids. Results of fall 2007 indicated the following:

- Eighty-three percent (83.9%) of students either somewhat agree or strongly agree that instructor feedback was helpful in understanding chemistry concepts
- Very few students (4.2%) felt uncomfortable discussing chemistry topics in class
- Eighty-nine percent (89.9%) of students either somewhat agree or strongly agree that group work assigned in class helped in understanding chemistry concepts
- Only five percent of students indicated that their problem-solving skills did not improve as a result of being enrolled
- Ninety percent (90.6%) of students indicated that their general understanding of chemistry concepts improved as a result of the hybrid course format.

The results of the Chem110 hybrid course evaluation results align with current research from the National Educause Center for Applied Research (ECAR). The ECAR study results indicate students perceive information technologies (IT) as helpful in the learning process. Specifically

- Two-thirds (64.4%) of the ECAR respondents either agree or strongly agree that IT in courses improved learning
- Fifty-six (56.8%) percent of ECAR respondents either agree or strongly agree they are more engaged in courses that use technology
- Sixty-nine (69.1%) percent of ECAR respondents stated that IT improves communication and collaboration with classmates.¹

The hybrid learning project illustrates Penn State Berks commitment to innovative learning technologies.

Educause (2006). [The Educause Center for Applied Research \(ECAR\) Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology](#)

“Look For”...

The PRA office has begun compiling several institutional level documents and reports. These research aids are in response to the implementation the *Building on 50 Years of Excellence*, 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, University assessment mandates and feedback from faculty and staff.

These reports will be available on the PRA web site. A new web page was designed especially for these documents and reports. They will also be available by request..

Special gratitude to Stefanie Kerns who has undertaken the assembly and development of these reports.

Available to the campus by May 2008:

- *Penn State Berks 2007-08 Fact Book*
- “*Building on 50 Years of Excellence*” 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, Final
- Environmental Scan
- 2007 Market Research Recommendations
- CSRDE Peer & Benchmark Analyses.
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results and benchmark comparisons to other Penn State campuses and other colleges in Berks national peer comparison set.

Campus Stat

Enrollment at Penn State Berks has been increasing consistently since fall 2002. Female enrollment has increased by twenty-five percent (24.8%) since fall 2002.

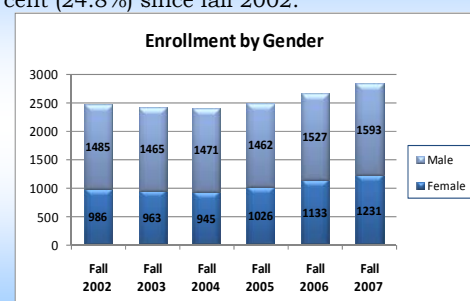


Figure 2: Enrollment By Gender