

A Survey of Businesses on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation
to Determine the Degree of Importance
of Entry-level Skills of Word Processors/Secretaries

by
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A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
Business Education

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

March 25, 1990

Spec
UPUG
P378. K835

APPROVAL

of a professional paper submitted by

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Norman Millikin, chairman of her committee, Dr. Daniel Hertz, and Dr. Patrick Head. Their time, assistance, and encouragement was of great value.

This study could not have been conducted without the prompt return of information and cooperation from the small businesses on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. Their assistance in this project is greatly appreciated. The writer also expresses appreciation to the Fort Peck Community College, Wolf Point Chamber of Commerce, the Wolf Point Job Employment Service, the city offices of Wolf Point and Poplar, the Roosevelt County Extension Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Fort Peck Tribes for their support and interest in this project.

The writer also expresses sincere appreciation to her family--Chris, Jon, and Jim--for their encouragement and patience during the course of her graduate work; and a special appreciation to Dr. Gar Amundson, whose "persistent encouragement" made completion of this project possible.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to measure the perceptions of small businesses on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana on what skills they preferred an entry-level word processor/secretary possess. Those findings would then be used as the basis for establishing effective business and vocational education programs at Fort Peck Community College, Poplar, Montana. To assess the needs of the small businesses on the reservation, a questionnaire was mailed in August, 1989, to those small businesses employing entry-level office workers. The survey was comprehensive in nature, covering technical and nontechnical skills.

Since one of the objectives of the College is to meet community needs, this assessment will aid in the formulation of effective business and vocational courses and serve as areas of emphasis in other courses that will give the graduate competencies for ready employment.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The majority of students who attend Fort Peck Community College will never leave the reservation and will search for employment locally. Therefore, it is essential that the Fort Peck Community College instructors realize what job competencies are necessary for gainful employment in reservation small businesses.

The business and vocational education instructors have been utilizing textbooks that present excellent learning theory and up-to-date concepts and standards. However, theory alone does not make for a well-trained employee without the consideration of the needs of small businesses. Thus, business and vocational education objectives and general small business needs should be interrelated to build a productive product--a qualified, entry-level employee.

Fort Peck Community College has as one of its missions: "...to serve its clientele by maintaining an occupational training program based on the needs of the people living on and near the reservation and on jobs presently available in the region." (FPCC:15) One of its objectives is: "...to provide academic and vocational training for American Indians and area residents in those careers and occupations which have a high employment potential and to improve

employee proficiency within local businesses, industries, and government agencies." (FPCC:15)

If the College is to provide training that will improve employee proficiency within local businesses, then it seems necessary to gather information from the employer's point-of-view. The information obtained from this survey will be used to evaluate, update, or change business and vocational educational programs at FPCC.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the degree of importance of computer and general office skills desired of entry-level word processors/secretaries on Fort Peck Indian Reservation small businesses.

Need for the Study

Fort Peck Community College is a fairly new institution, having being chartered in 1978. The current enrollment is over 80% Native American of which approximately 1% transfer to other institutions. The balance of the students remain on the reservation for various reasons--financial, personal, and very much cultural. (FPCC:1986) For this reason, this writer believes that this lack of mobility necessitates evaluating current conditions in the local job market and to survey employer opinions on the competencies necessary in obtaining ready employment.

Specific Questions to be Answered

Some questions to be answered from this study are:

1. What skills do employers rate as most important for entry-level word processors/secretaries?
2. What technical and non-technical skills are necessary for area employment?
3. Are the Fort Peck Community College business and vocational graduates being trained to meet the needs of the employers?
4. What improvements need to be made to improve course content and instruction of the business and vocational instruction classes?
5. What classes need to be added and/or dropped from the Fort Peck Community College business and vocational programs?
6. What is the level of awareness of Fort Peck Community College by businesses?

Limitations of Study

The study was limited to small businesses located on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation who employ entry-level word processors/secretaries. It was determined that 50% of the reservation small businesses would be sampled.

Definition of Terms

Business and Vocational Education Graduates: those who have completed the course work listed under this field of study. This could be a graduate completing a minimum of 30 semester credit hours for a certificate degree or 60 semester credit hours for an Associate of Arts Degree. (Fort Peck Community College Catalog, 1989-1991:27)

Business Education: formal preparation for occupations in business below the baccalaureate degree. It encompasses all course work listed under the Business Administration and Office Technology options. (Houston, 1986:28)

Computer Skills: skills necessary in office automation. These provide the ability to: 1) keyboard and word process information; 2) store and retrieve data; 3) transmit data through interconnected computers; 4) utilize data bases, spreadsheets, and graphics software; and 5) operate electronic mails systems. (Shelley, 1986:2.27)

Federal/State Governments: those agencies operated by the United States Government or State of Montana.

Financial/Accounting Field: includes all banking and accounting operations.

Fort Peck Indian Reservation: the home of the Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes, contains approximately 2,093,318 acres of land in the extreme northeastern portion of the State of Montana. A significant portion of the Reservation area is situated in Roosevelt County. The remainder of the Reservation's land base is situated in Daniels, Valley and Sheridan Counties. The Reservation is approximately 100 miles long by 40 miles in width. With the Big Muddy Creek to the East, the Missouri River to the South and the Porcupine Creek to the West, the Reservation is encompassed by natural boundaries. The Northern boundary of the

Reservation is approximately 20 miles South of the U.S./Canadian border. (FPCC, 1986:142) (See Appendix A)

FPCC: Fort Peck Community College

General Office Skills: skills that refer to the qualities, characteristics, attitudes, and attributes which enable an individual to interact on the job with other individuals in an acceptable manner. This area includes social skills, effective human relations, work habits and attitudes, and communication skills. (Jacobsen, 1985:11) These skills are also known as employability skills.

Medical Field: includes hospitals, optometrists, surgeons, chiropractors, and the Indian Health Service.

Needs Assessment: the formal harvesting, collection and listing of needs, placing the needs in priority order, and selecting the needs of highest priority for action. This process includes the partners in planning, which in education are the learners, the implementers, and the society. (Kaufman, 1981:344)

Small Businesses: independently owned, for profit enterprises with a small number of employees (usually not exceeding 500 for manufacturing or 100 for non-manufacturing). (Houston, 1986:223)

Tribal Government: those agencies on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation such as Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fort Peck Tribes, and Fort Peck Indian Agency.

Vocational Education: formal preparation for semi-skilled, skilled, technical, or paraprofessional occupations usually below the baccalaureate degree. (Houston, 1986:262)

Summary:

First, it is hoped that this study will serve as a basis for curricular development at Fort Peck Community College. Second, it is hoped that this study will become the cornerstone for future business/industry partnerships so vital for the relevancy of occupational training.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature in regards to the occupational outlook for entry-level positions and the job qualifications employers find essential in competent office workers.

Occupational Outlook

The occupational outlook looks bright. Those occupational areas commonly referred to as administrative support occupations--secretarial, typist, bookkeeper, and data entry positions--are expected to rise 11 % by the year 2000. This area is one of the slowest growing. However, this does not mean job prospects will be poor. Opportunities for employment will be due to replacement needs--workers transferring to other occupations or leaving the job market. (U.S.D.L., 1988:12)

The slowdown in growth is due to technological advances. Office jobs once done manually are now done electronically. The advent of the computer has caused a decline in the number of typists but an increase in computer operators. "Operations involving interaction with others will grow while "back-office" jobs will not." (U.S.D.L., 1988:12). Becoming a service/information-oriented high tech society has led to the increase of clerical positions--

receptionists and sales clerks--because they are linked to fast-growing industries--the service industry.

Why the concern? Review of the literature has revealed that businesses are not getting competent office workers. Businesses are stating that there is "...a wide gap (that) exists between the skill requirements of jobs and the skills of job seekers." (Feuer, 1987:27) The Chief of the Training Department of the International Labor Organization has stated:

"We have a system which is not producing enough of the skills we need in the form we need them... and where the emphasis is still on yesterday's requirements rather than tomorrow's." (Kanawaty, 1985:401)

What skills are employers looking for in office workers? Review of the literature shows that employers are looking for individuals who possess the basic skills--computational, communication, keyboarding, and computer literacy skills--and nontechnical or employability skills. (Wentling, 1987:313) In fact, some businesses prefer that schools provide the "basics"; business will provide the technical training. (Raymond, 1985:58) In August, 1975, a statewide survey of Texas employers concerning areas that were in need of improvement for employees were:

"...concern for productivity, pride in work, responsibility, dependability, work habits, attitudes towards the company and employer, write and speak effectively, follow instructions, reading skills, ambition, motivation, and desire to get ahead." (Brown, 1976:7)

In another study (Luft, 1986:147-157), 270 employers in Illinois were asked to rate five nontechnical skills areas in order of importance. The five areas presented were: problem solving, stress management, professional characteristics, communication skills, and human relations' principles. The area rated most important was professional characteristics--"...initiative, cooperativeness, reliability, honesty, loyalty, confidentiality, punctuality, good work habits, adhere to company policy, and demonstrate courteous and helpful behavior." (Luft, 1986:151,152) Other research (Wentling, 1986;Laselle, 1986;Fusselman, 1985; Vincent, 1979) supports these findings.

Recently, in 1987, Ms. Ellyn Dickmann surveyed 175 Fort Collins-area businesses on the level of importance ten computer skills and ten general office skills were to their businesses. With 105 responding, the top five computer skills were: to keyboard/type accurately, to keyboard/type with speed; to understand word processing; to have knowledge of the personal computer operating system; and to operate dictation machines while typing on a word processor. The top five general office skills businesses found important were: skills in human relations; knowledge of spelling/--grammar/punctuation; ability to proofread; ability to operate general office machines; and skills in records/file management. (Dickmann, 1989:33-35)

Are there any studies identifying skill deficiencies?

In 1982, a national survey of business, school, and organized labor was conducted by the New York-based Center for Public Resources on the academic preparation of youth entering the work force. The responding companies cited deficiencies in the following areas: speaking, listening, math and problem-solving, writing, science, inability to follow directions and communicate ideas, and mathematical mistakes. (Raymond, 1985:57)

What did the literature recommend to resolve this situation? One article by Katherine Moser (Moser, 1986:-4,5,27,28) suggested that education and business work together rather than separately. This "partnership" would steer its employees towards a more traditional acquisition of basic instruction, complementing their existing knowledge.

National trends may not adequately reflect local trends. Therefore, local employment opportunities should be evaluated.

Summary

From the review of literature, it can be argued that Fort Peck Community College needs to evaluate the relevancy of its business/vocational educational programs in producing graduates competent for entry-level positions. The literature also indicates that forming a "partnership" with local businesses will lend to more relevant training.

Chapter III

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree of importance of computer and general office skills small businesses prefer of entry-level word processing/secretaries on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and use those finding to evaluate, update, or change business and vocational educational programs at FPCC.

The writer followed these procedures in obtaining the data:

1. Obtained the approval of the FPCC Dean of Instruction to conduct the survey. (June, 1988)
2. Obtained the approval of the FPCC President to conduct the survey. (June, 1988)
3. Reviewed the literature to learn what others have said. (June through August, 1988)
4. Organized and developed the survey instrument. (July through August, 1989)
5. Secured approval of instrument from Dr. Norm Millikin at Montana State University. (August, 1989)
6. Submitted a news article informing the community of the survey. (August, 1989)
7. Mailed the initial questionnaire including a letter of explanation. (August 17, 1989)
8. Mailed a follow-up letter and another questionnaire. (September 14, 1989)
9. Wrote the final draft. (May, 1990)

Sources of Data

As previously stated, a large number of business and vocational education graduates stay on the reservation for employment. For this reason, it was decided to divide the Fort Peck Indian Reservation community into the following eleven categories: 1) legal; 2) real estate; 3) tribal government; 4) federal and state government; 5) county government; 6) city government; 7) education; 8) medical; 9) insurance; 10) financial/accounting, and 11) small business. In December, 1988, a comprehensive mailing list of small businesses was compiled from the combined efforts of the Wolf Point Chamber of Commerce, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Roosevelt County Extension Service, and the Mountain Bell Telephone Book. The list was analyzed. Because of the numbers involved, it was decided to survey 100 per cent of the population in the first ten categories and a make a 50% sampling of the small business category. In the first ten categories, 79 letters and questionnaires were mailed. Out of a total of 134 small businesses, a letter and questionnaire was mailed to every second business.

Questionnaire

The writer decided to modify the questionnaire (Appendix D) used by Ms. Ellyn M. Dickmann who conducted a similar study at Fort Collins, Colorado, to include questions

regarding the level of awareness of reservation businesses to Fort Peck Community College.

The one-page questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section consisted of five questions. The first question pertained to the size of the business completing the questionnaire. The second question helped determine how many employees in that business utilize word processing/secretarial skills. The third question helped determine if that particular business was familiar with the business education course offerings at Fort Peck Community College. The fourth question helped to determine if that business utilized FPCC for training/retraining. And, the fifth question helped to determine how many FPCC graduates were employed in reservation businesses.

The second section measured the degree of importance computer skills were to the respondent's business. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the skills according to the following scale:

VI = Very Important

I = Important

LI = Least Important

N/A = Not Applicable

In this section, respondents were given the opportunity to include other computer skills important to their business and to rate these skills.

The third section of the questionnaire was similar to the second. This section involved the rating of general office skills using the same rating scale as above. Once again, respondents had the opportunity to include other general skills important to their business.

Administration of Questionnaire

On August 7, 1989, a press release (Appendix B) was placed in the local newspaper announcing the pending survey. On August 17, 1989, the questionnaire along with a letter of explanation (Appendix C) was mailed to 146 businesses on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.

Approximately four weeks after the first mailing, a follow-up letter (Appendix E) and another questionnaire were mailed to businesses that had not responded.

On September 22, 1989, the survey was considered successful and terminated.

Table I on the following page presents an analysis of the final returns. Of the 146 questionnaires sent in the first mailing, 66 were returned, or 45 percent. In the second mailing, 80 questionnaires were sent out. Thirty-seven (37) were returned, or 46 percent. Out of a total mailing of 146 questionnaires, 103 were returned, or 71 percent, and 10 returns were unused due to duplication of businesses, not applicable, or out of business.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF SURVEYS MAILED AND PERCENT RETURNED
ACCORDING TO BUSINESS TYPE

<u>Business Type</u>	<u>Sent</u>	<u>Received</u>	<u>% Returned</u>
Legal	6	5	83
Real Estate	3	2	67
Tribal Government	3	3	100
Federal/State Government	10	8	80
County Government	4	3	75
City Government	6	4	67
Education	13	12	92
Medical	14	11	79
Insurance	13	8	61
Financial/Accounting	7	6	86
Small Businesses	67	41	62
Total	146	103	

First Mailing: 146 Sent/66 Returned---Return Rate of 45%

Second Mailing: 80 Sent/37 Returned---Return Rate of 46%

Total Mailing: 146 Sent/103 Returned--Return Rate of 71%

10 returns were unused due to duplication, not applicable, or out of business.

A total of 103 businesses completed and returned the questionnaire: Legal, 5; Real Estate, 2; Tribal Government, 3; Federal/State Government, 8; County Government, 3; City Government, 4; Education, 12; Medical, 11; Insurance, 8; Financial/Accounting, 6; and Small Businesses, 41. The highest return rate was 100 percent for Tribal Government; the lowest return rate was 61 percent for Insurance with Small Businesses running a close second with 62 percent.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Included in the following pages are the results of the survey taken during August and September, 1989, on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. The results are shown according to the eleven categories and not by descending or ascending order of data. For Section I of the questionnaire, each question is stated and the results are set up in a table according to the responses given.

TABLE 2

Question: How many employees does your business have?

Number of Employees by Business Type		
<u>Business Type</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>$\bar{X}$ Employed</u>
Legal	1-3	1.6
Real Estate	1-2	1.5
Tribal Government	100-337	146.0
Federal/State Government	2-64	10.6
County Government	8-28	12.0
City Government	2-15	7.0
Education	1-145	35.8
Medical	2-75	25.0
Insurance	1-5	1.6
Financial/Accounting	1-25	9.0
Small Business	1-370	16.9

Most of the business categories surveyed had a range of 1 to 370 employees. Tribal Government showed the highest minimum number of employees with 100, and maximum number of employees with 337. This group involved only three (3) agencies: Fort Peck Tribes, Fort Peck Indian Agency, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. For the purpose of this survey, it was decided to separate the Indian agencies from the Federal agencies to show the number of employees employed specifically in tribal agencies compared to other federal agencies.

Most Small Businesses had a range from one (1) to forty-five (45) employees. From the 41 responses, 38 were useable. The average employed in 37 of these businesses was 7.1 employees. The last business, a Indian-owned manufacturing business, employed 370 workers. Thus, the mean of the group was increased to 16.9 employees per business.

It is quite obvious when looking at the table that the agencies that employ the greatest number of workers are the Tribal Government and Small Business.

Legal, Real Estate, and Insurance categories were the categories that employed the fewest workers--less than two (2).

TABLE 3

Question: How many employees in your business utilize word processing/secretarial skills?

Percent of Employees in Business That Utilize Word Processing/Secretarial Skills	
<u>Business Type</u>	<u>%</u>
Legal	100
Real Estate	67
Tribal Government	33
Federal/State Government	22
County Government	25
City Government	32
Education	20
Medical	18
Insurance	63
Financial/Accounting	28
Small Business	9

Out of the total population surveyed, 17.6% of the employees utilize word processing/secretarial skills.

The three categories--Legal, Real Estate, and Insurance--that employed less than 2 workers had the greatest percent of workers utilizing word processing skills. The Legal profession showed 100 percent of the employees used word processing. The Small Business category had the least number of employees utilizing word processing skills. However, word processing occurs in every category.

Question: Are you familiar with the business education course offerings at Fort Peck Community College?

Percent of Business Types Familiar with Business Education Course Offerings at FPCC			
<u>Business Type</u>	<u>% Familiar With</u>	<u>% Not Familiar</u>	<u>% Unsure</u>
Legal	60	40	0
Real Estate	50	0	50
Tribal Government	33	33	34
Federal/State Government	75	25	0
County Government	0	67	33
City Government	50	50	0
Education	50	50	0
Medical	27	55	18
Insurance	11	33	56
Financial/Accounting	33	67	0
Small Business	51	38	11

Out of the total population surveyed, 48% of the businesses are familiar with the business education course offerings at FPCC, 48% are unfamiliar, and 4% are unsure.

The category that showed the most familiarity with the business education course offerings at Fort Peck Community College was the Federal/State Governments with 75 percent. Second was the Legal profession with 60 percent; third Small Businesses with 51 percent; and fourth, Real Estate, City Government, and Education, each with 50 percent familiarity. The County Government showed the least percentage with 0 percent.

TABLE 5

Question: Have you utilized the services provided by Fort Peck Community College for training/retraining of yourself or staff?

Percent of Business Types Who Utilized FPCC for Training/Retraining			
<u>Business Type</u>	<u>% Utilized</u>	<u>% Not Utilized</u>	<u>% Unsure</u>
Legal	0	100	0
Real Estate	0	100	0
Tribal Government	67	0	33
Federal/State Government	0	100	0
County Government	0	67	33
City Government	0	100	0
Education	25	67	8
Medical	11	89	0
Insurance	0	80	20
Financial/Accounting	0	100	0
Small Business	19	70	11

Out of the total population surveyed, 14% of the businesses have utilized Fort Peck Community College for training/retraining.

Seven categories--Legal, Real Estate, Federal/State Government, County Government, City Government, Insurance, and Financial/Accounting--have not utilized the services provided by Fort Peck Community College for training/retraining of themselves or their staff. The Tribal Government had the highest usage rate of 67 percent. The Education system was second with 25 percent; Small Business was third with 19 percent, and the Medical profession was last with 11 percent.

TABLE 6

Question: Are any of your employees graduates of Fort Peck Community College?

Percent of Business Types Who Employ FPCC Graduates			
<u>Business Type</u>	<u>% Yes</u>	<u>% No</u>	<u>% Unsure</u>
Legal	0	100	0
Real Estate	0	100	0
Tribal Government	67	33	0
Federal/State Government	0	75	25
County Government	0	67	33
City Government	0	100	0
Education	8	58	34
Medical	11	89	0
Insurance	0	80	20
Financial/Accounting	17	83	0
Small Business	8	76	16

Out of the total population surveyed, 9% of the businesses employ a Fort Peck Community College graduate.

According to Table 6, only five categories were aware they employed a Fort Peck Community College graduate. Sixty-seven (67) percent of the Tribal Government agencies employed at least one FPCC graduate. Seventeen (17) percent of the Financial/Accounting field were aware they employed an FPCC graduate. Eleven (11) percent of the Medical profession employed an FPCC graduate, and 8 percent of the Educational and Small Business categories were aware they employed a FPCC graduate. It was surprising to note that

three professional areas were 100 percent sure they did not employ a graduate from FPCC--the Legal and Real Estate fields and City Government.

Table 7 on page 26 summarizes the findings from the second and third section on the questionnaire. The top five computer skills and general office skills are given as rated by business category. Note: the Real Estate category did not have a top or bottom five as many questions on the questionnaire were not applicable.

Based on these findings, the following conclusions were drawn about entry-level computer skills:

1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy were computer skills rated as very important to all business types.
2. With the exception of Real Estate, keyboarding/-typing speed was rated as very important to the business types.
3. Word processing rated as very important in nine out of eleven categories.
4. Knowledge of the personal computer operating system was rated as very important in six out of the eleven groups.
5. Other computer skills rated as very important but not in all categories were: dictation machine operating skills, computerized spreadsheet skills, data base management skills, computerized graphics/-charting program skills, and desktop publishing skills.

Based on these findings, the following conclusions were drawn about entry-level general office skills:

1. Human relations and spelling/grammar/punctuation were rated as being very important to all business types.
2. In eight categories proofreading was rated as very important.
3. In seven categories records/file management skills were rated as important.

4. In five categories the ability to compose letters and memos were important.
5. Other general office skills rated as important but not in all categories were the ability to: operate general office machines, to understand general arithmetic, and to work the electronic calculator.

TABLE 7

Top Five Computer Skills and General Office Skills as Rated by Business Category		
Business Type	Computer Skills	General Office Skills
Legal	1. Word processing 2. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 3. Keyboarding/typing speed 4. Personal computer operating system 5. Dictation machine operation skills while typing on a word processor	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Proofreading 4. Ability to operate general office machines 5. Letter/memo composition
Real Estate	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	1. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 2. Letter/memo composition 3. Proofreading 4. Human relations 5. Records/file management
Tribal Government	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Word processing 3. Personal computer operating system 4. Computerized spreadsheet 5. Keyboarding/typing speed	1. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 2. Proofreading 3. Records/file management 4. Letter/memo composition 5. General arithmetic
Federal Government	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Keyboarding/typing speed 3. Data base management 4. Computerized graphics/charting program 5. Desktop publishing	1. Human relations 2. Records/file management 3. General arithmetic 4. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 5. Electronic calculator
County Government	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Keyboarding/typing speed 3. Word processing 4. Dictation machine operation skills while typing on a word processor 5. _____	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Records/file management 4. Letter/memo composition 5. Proofreading
City Government	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Personal computer operating system 3. Keyboarding/typing speed 4. Word processing 5. Computerized spreadsheet	1. Electronic calculator 2. Ability to operate general office machines 3. Human relations 4. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 5. General arithmetic
Education	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Word processing 3. Keyboarding/typing speed 4. Personal computer operating system 5. Desktop publishing	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Ability to operate general office machines 4. Proofreading 5. Letter/memo composition
Medical	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Word processing 3. Dictation machine operation skills while typing on a word processor 4. Data base management 5. Keyboarding/typing speed	1. Human relations 2. Records/file management 3. Ability to operate general office machines 4. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 5. Proofreading
Insurance	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Keyboarding/typing speed 3. Word processing 4. Personal computer operating system 5. Dictation machine operation skills while typing on a word processor	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Ability to operate general office machines 4. Proofreading 5. Records/file management
Financial/Accounting	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Word processing 3. Personal computer operating system 4. Computerized spreadsheet 5. Keyboarding/typing speed	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Proofreading 4. General arithmetic 5. Electronic calculator
Small Business	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Keyboarding/typing speed 3. Word processing 4. Computerized spreadsheet 5. Data base management	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. General arithmetic 4. Records/file management 5. Ability to operate general office machines

Table 8 on page 28 shows what the business categories rated the five least desired or not important computer skills and general office skills. It seemed apparent for all business types (with the exception of Real Estate) that businesses have not kept up with technology.

Based on these findings, the following conclusions were drawn about the bottom five computer skills:

1. Computerized graphics, electronic mail systems, and desktop publishing were rated as not applicable to all business types (with no rating by Real Estate).
2. Dictation/machine transcription, data base management, and computerized spreadsheet were rated as somewhat important to the business types.

Based on these findings, the following conclusions were drawn about the bottom five general office skills:

1. Shorthand/stenography was found to be not applicable to all business types.
2. Computerized accounting was rated as being not important in seven categories.
3. Other general skills found to be somewhat important are skills on the electronic calculator, proofreading, and letter/memo composition.

TABLE 8

Bottom Five Computer Skills and General Office Skills as Rated by Business Category		
Business Type	Computer Skills	General Office Skills
Legal	1. Computerized spreadsheet 2. Data base management 3. Computerized graphics 4. Electronic mail systems 5. Desktop publishing	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. Computerized accounting 3. Electronic calculator 4. _____ 5. _____
Real Estate	1. Word processing 2. Dictation/machine transcription 3. Personal computer operating system 4. Computerized spreadsheet 5. Data base management	1. Computerized accounting 2. Shorthand/stenography 3. Electronic calculator 4. _____ 5. _____
Tribal Government	1. Electronic mail systems 2. Desktop publishing 3. Computerized graphics 4. Dictation/machine transcription 5. Computerized spreadsheet	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
Federal Government	1. Desktop Publishing 2. Computerized graphics 3. Electronic mail systems 4. Dictation/machine transcription 5. _____	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. Computerized accounting 3. Proofreading 4. _____ 5. _____
County Government	1. Database management 2. Electronic mail systems 3. Computerized graphics 4. Desktop publishing 5. Computerized spreadsheet	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. Computerized accounting 3. Electronic calculator 4. _____ 5. _____
City Government	1. Desktop publishing 2. Computerized graphics 3. Dictation/machine transcription 4. Data base management 5. Electronic mail systems	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
Education	1. Dictation/machine transcription 2. Electronic mail systems 3. Computerized graphics 4. Desktop publishing 5. _____	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. Computerized accounting 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
Medical	1. Desktop publishing 2. Electronic mail systems 3. Computerized graphics 4. Computerized spreadsheet 5. _____	1. Computerized accounting 2. Shorthand/stenography 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
Insurance	1. Desktop publishing 2. Computerized graphics 3. Electronic mail systems 4. Data base management 5. Computerized spreadsheets	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. Computerized accounting 3. Electronic calculator 4. _____ 5. _____
Financial/Accounting	1. Desktop publishing 2. Electronic mail systems 3. Computerized graphics 4. Dictation/machine transcription 5. Data base management	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
Small Business	1. Desktop publishing 2. Dictation/machine transcription 3. Electronic mail systems 4. Computerized graphics 5. _____	1. Shorthand/stenography 2. Computerized accounting 3. Letter/memo composition 4. Proofreading 5. Electronic calculator

Overall, the findings were fairly consistent with the review of literature and with Ms. Ellyn Dickmann's survey in Fort Collins, Colorado. The results of her study are shown in Table 9 on page 30.

TABLE 9
Top Five Computer Skills and General Office Skills
as Rated by Business Category

Business Type	Computer Skills	General Office Skills
Legal	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Word processing 3. Dictation machine operation skills while typing on a word processor 4. Keyboarding/typing speed 5. Personal computer operating system	1. Proofreading 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Human relations 4. Ability to operate general office machines 5. Records/file management
Real Estate and Property Management	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Keyboarding/typing speed 3. Word processing 4. Computerized spreadsheet 5. Personal computer operating system	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Proofreading 4. Ability to operate general office machines 5. Records/file management
Government, Public Administration, Education, Employment Agencies	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Personal computer operating system 3. Word processing 4. Keyboarding/typing speed 5. Computerized spreadsheet	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Ability to operate general office machines 4. Proofreading 5. Records/file management
Medical	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Dictation machine operation skills while typing on a word processor 3. Keyboarding/typing speed 4. Word processing 5. Personal computer operating system	1. Human relations 2. Ability to operate general office machines 3. Records/file management 4. Electronic calculator 5. General arithmetic
Insurance	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Personal computer operating system 3. Word processing 4. Keyboarding/typing speed 5. Data base management	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Ability to operate general office machines 4. Records/file management 5. Proofreading
Financial, Accounting, Investment, and Title Companies	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Word processing 3. Keyboarding/typing speed 4. Personal computer operating system 5. Computerized spreadsheet	1. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 2. Proofreading 3. Human relations 4. Ability to operate general office machines 5. Letter/memo composition
Architectural and Engineering	1. Keyboarding/typing accuracy 2. Word processing 3. Keyboarding/typing speed 4. Personal computer operating system 5. Computerized spreadsheet	1. Human relations 2. Spelling/grammar/punctuation 3. Proofreading 4. General arithmetic 5. Ability to operate general office machines

Many of the respondents wrote in comments. Some of their comments are as follows:

Employees should:

1. be familiar with common word processing software
2. be proficient with computers
3. have the ability to think on their own
4. have the ability to learn
5. possess stress management skills
6. possess organizational skills
7. possess supervisory and management skills (some secretaries are placed in this category when shorthanded)
8. show professional confidentiality
9. perform noncomputer accounting or simple bookkeeping
10. be able to keep their personal life separate from their professional life
11. show a sense of loyalty and commitment
12. show dependability and comprehension of what is expected as an employee
13. demonstrate telephone courtesy
14. be concerned with personal appearance (well-groomed, hair neat, and dressed professionally)
15. demonstrate good English and diction
16. have good customer relation skills

Out of the total population surveyed, the following represents the summary of the findings:

1. 17.6% of the employees utilized word processing/-secretarial skills.
2. 48% of the businesses were familiar with the business education course offerings at Fort Peck Community College, 48% were unfamiliar, and 4% were unsure.
3. 14% of the businesses had utilized Fort Peck Community College for training/retraining.
4. 9% of the businesses employed a Fort Peck Community College graduate.
5. Keyboarding/typing accuracy were computer skills rated as very important to all business types.
6. Human relations and spelling/grammar/punctuation were rated as being very important to all business types.
7. Computerized graphics, electronic mail systems, and desktop publishing were computer skills rated as not applicable to all business types.
8. Shorthand/stenography was found to be not applicable to all business types.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation businesses of entry-level skills for word processors/secretaries. The study was limited to businesses in the following eleven categories: (1) Legal; (2) Real Estate; (3) Tribal Government; (4) Federal/State Government; (5) County Government; (6) City Government; (7) Education; (8) Medicine; (9) Insurance; (10) Financial/Accounting; and (11) Small Businesses.

The purpose of the study was to meet the following objectives:

1. What skills do employers rate as most important for entry-level word processors/secretaries?
2. What technical and non-technical skills are necessary for area employment?
3. Are the Fort Peck Community College business and vocational graduates being trained to meet the needs of the employers?
4. What improvements need to be made to improve course content and instruction of the business and vocational instruction classes?
5. What classes need to be added or dropped from the Fort Peck Community College business and vocational programs?
6. What is the level of awareness of Fort Peck Community College by businesses?

The instrument used in this study to survey general computer and office skills was duplicated from a study by Ms. Ellyn Dickmann in Ft. Collins, Colorado. Slight modifications were made to find out community awareness of Fort Peck Community College and the business programs. Because the original instrument had already been tested, no further evaluation was done (see Appendix D).

The population surveyed in the first eleven categories above were limited by the Fort Peck Indian Reservation boundaries. (see Appendix A) Due to the number of businesses in each category on the Reservation, the researcher decided to survey the entire population of the first ten (10) categories and take a random sample in the small business category. This was done by manually selecting every second business listed on a data base printout for small businesses.

A news release explaining the study was printed in the local Wolf Point paper. One week later a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a stamped, addressed envelope were mailed to each of the selected businesses. After four weeks, those not responding were sent a follow-up letter and another questionnaire. A total return rate of 71 percent was achieved.

The data was analyzed using the tally method. It was tabulated for all businesses in all three sections--general information about the college, general computer skills, and

general office-related skills. Each business type was tabulated separately in all three sections. In each question in the first, second, and third sections, the data was tabulated separately for each business. Then, this data was grouped and represented by the listing of each skill and how it was rated by each business type.

Findings:

The major findings of this study for the first section revealed that:

1. The businesses employing the greater number of workers on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation were in: Tribal Government, Small Business, Education, Medical, and Federal/State Government categories.
2. The businesses which had the greater number of employees utilizing word processing/secretarial skills were in the Legal, Real Estate, and Insurance categories.
3. The business category which had the least number of employees utilizing word processing/secretarial skills were in Small Business.
4. The Federal/State Government category was the most familiar with the business education course offerings at Fort Peck Community College.
5. Fifty (50) percent or more of the businesses in these categories--Federal/State Government, Legal, Small Business, Real Estate, City Government, and Education--responded that they were familiar with the business education course offerings at Fort Peck Community College. However, fifty (50) percent were not.
6. The following business categories have not utilized the services provided by Fort Peck Community College for training/retraining of themselves or staff--Legal, Real Estate, Federal/State Government, County Government, City Government, Insurance, and Financial/Accounting.

7. Sixty-seven (67) percent of the Tribal Government agencies utilized the services provided by Fort Peck Community College for training/retraining of themselves and staff.
8. The following business categories were 100 percent sure they did not employ an FPCC graduate: Legal, Real Estate, and City Government.
9. Sixty-seven percent of the Tribal Government agencies employed a Fort Peck Community College graduate.

The major findings of this study for the second section and third section revealed that:

1. The top five entry-level computer skills were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Keyboarding/typing speed, Word processing, Personal computer operating systems, and Dictation machine operating skills.
2. The top five entry-level general office skills were Human relations, Spelling/grammar/punctuation, Proofreading, Records/file management, and Letter/memo composition.
3. The top three computer skills for the Legal category were Word processing, Keyboarding/typing accuracy, and Keyboarding/typing speed; and the top three general office skills were Human relations, Spelling/grammar/punctuation, and Proofreading.
4. The top computer skill for the Real Estate category was Keyboarding/typing accuracy, and the top three general office skills were Spelling/grammar/punctuation, Letter/memo composition, and Proofreading.
5. The top three computer skills for Tribal Government agencies were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Word processing, and Personal computer operation systems; and the top three general office skills were Spelling/grammar/punctuation, Proofreading, and Records/file management.
6. The top three computer skills for Federal/State Government agencies were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Keyboarding/typing speed, and Data base management; and the top three general office

skills were Human relations, Records/file management, and General arithmetic.

7. The top three computer skills for County Government agencies were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Keyboarding/typing speed, and Word processing; and the top three general office skills were Human relations, Spelling/grammar/punctuation, and Records/file management.
8. The top three computer skills for City Government agencies were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Personal computer operating systems, and Keyboarding/typing speed; and the top three general office skills were Electronic calculator, Ability to operate general office machines, and Human relations.
9. The top three computer skills for Education were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Word processing, and Keyboarding/typing speed; and the top three general office skills were Human relations, Spelling/grammar/punctuation, and the Ability to operate general office machines.
10. The top three computer skills for Medical agencies were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Word processing, and Dictation machine operation skills while typing on a word processor; and the top three general office skills were Human relations, Records/file management, and the Ability to operate general office machines.
11. The top three computer skills for the Insurance category were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Keyboarding/typing speed, and Word processing; and the top three general office skills were Human relations, Spelling/grammar/punctuation.
12. The top three computer skills for the Financial/Accounting agencies were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Word processing, and Personal computer operating system; and the top three general office skills were Human relations, Spelling/grammar/punctuation, and Proofreading.
13. The top three computer skills for Small Businesses were Keyboarding/typing accuracy, Keyboarding/typing speed, and Word processing; and the top three general office skills were Human relations, Spelling/grammar/punctuation, and General arithmetic.

14. All businesses perceived Keyboarding/typing accuracy within the top two computer skills.
15. The Tribal Government category was the only business not to rate Human relations in the top five general office skills.

Other findings from this study revealed that:

1. The Legal category rated as not applicable three computer skills: Computerized spreadsheet, Data base management, and Computerized graphics; and rated the bottom two general office skills as not applicable Shorthand/stenography and Computerized accounting.
2. The Real Estate category rated as not applicable every computer skill with the exception of Keyboarding/typing accuracy and Keyboarding/typing speed. Computerized accounting was the only general office skill rated as not applicable.
3. The Tribal Government agencies rated as not applicable or not important Electronic mail systems, Desktop publishing, and Computerized graphics; and rated least important the general office skill Shorthand/stenography.
4. The Federal/State Government agencies rated as not applicable in the computer skills, Desktop Publishing, Computerized graphics, and Electronic mail systems; and the three general office skills rated as not applicable were Shorthand/stenography, Computerized accounting, and Proofreading.
5. The County Government agencies rated as not applicable the following computer skills: Desktop publishing, Database management, Electronic mail systems, Computerized graphics, and Computerized spreadsheet; and rated the general office skills-- Shorthand/stenography and Computerized accounting as not applicable.
6. The City Government agencies rated as not important or not applicable the following computer skills: Desktop publishing, Computerized graphics, Dictation/machine transcription, Database management, and Electronic mail; and the only general office skill rated least important was Shorthand/stenography.

7. The Education category rated least important the following computer skills: Dictation/machine transcription, Electronic mail systems, and Computerized graphics; and the only two general office skills rated least important were Shorthand/stenography and Computerized accounting.
8. The Medical field rated as least important the following computer skills: Desktop publishing, Electronic mail systems, Computerized graphics, Computerized spreadsheet, and Data base management; and the only two general office skills rated as not applicable were Computerized accounting and Shorthand/stenography.
9. The Insurance category rated as not important or not applicable the following computer skills: Desktop publishing, Computerized graphics, Electronic mail systems, Data base management, and Computerized spreadsheet; and the three general office skills rated as not important or not applicable were Shorthand/stenography, Computerized accounting, and Electronic calculator.
10. The Financial/Accounting category rated as not important or not applicable the following computer skills: Desktop publishing, Electronic mail systems, and Computerized graphics; and the only general office skill rated as not important was Shorthand/stenography.
11. The Small Business category rated as not important or not applicable the following computer skills: Desktop publishing, Dictation/machine transcription, Electronic mail systems, and Computerized graphics; and the general office skills rated as not important were Shorthand/stenography, Computerized accounting, Letter/memo composition, Proofreading, and Electronic calculator.

Conclusions

Based upon the findings from this study, the following conclusions were made:

1. The business categories on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation that employed the greatest number of workers were the Government and Medical agencies and Education.

2. Very few Small Businesses utilize computers.
3. Less than 18 percent of the employees in reservation businesses utilized word processing/secretarial skills.
4. Less than 50% of the total population surveyed were familiar with the business education course offerings at Fort Peck Community College.
5. Only 14 percent of the total population surveyed have utilized Fort Peck Community College for training/retraining.
6. Only 9 percent of the total population surveyed employ a Fort Peck Community College graduate.
7. Keyboarding/typing accuracy skills, Keyboarding/-typing speed skills and Word processing were very important to all business types and should be included and stressed in the business education curriculum.
8. Human relations, Spelling/grammar/punctuation skills, and proofreading were very important to all (but one) business types and should also be included and stressed in the business education curriculum.
9. Shorthand/stenography courses were rated as not important in all business categories.
10. All business categories were either not familiar with or had no use for the new technology in the computer field such as Computerized spreadsheet, Data base management, Computerized graphics, Electronic mail systems, and Desktop publishing.
11. Federal/State Government agencies have not utilized FPCC because they provide their own training workshops.
12. The Medical field provides its own training/retraining workshops.
13. The businesses do not employ many Fort Peck Community College graduates for several reasons: (1) until Fall, 1990, the college did not have a Placement Officer; (2) due to the fact that the college was founded in 1975, it has not had very many graduates; and (3) due to the falling

economy, many businesses are not hiring and are closing. The researcher based these reasons on the results of interviews with Fort Peck Community College staff and by the results of the research.

General Recommendations

The general recommendations presented are based upon the findings of the study.

1. The findings of this study should be made available to secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, to the Tribal Community Colleges, and to the Montana Job Service. Teachers, counselors, and placement offices could use the results of this study to guide students entering particular businesses with entry-level skills.
2. Secondary and post-secondary educators should have the results of this study to help guide students who want to enter a particular business type with both computer and general office skills.
3. Fort Peck Community College needs to increase its advertising campaign in recruiting individuals for training/retraining.
4. All business education curricula should require a course in human relations.
5. Since the general trend is towards advanced applications in computers, Business Education Departments should promote Desktop Publishing, Computerized Accounting, Computerized Graphics, and Electronic Mail. The researcher feels that the businesses surveyed do not have enough information about the use of these skills in their businesses.
6. Businesses should be surveyed on a regular basis to assure that their computer and general office skills are being met by post-secondary educational institutions.
7. The findings of this study should be made available to interested businesses so that they can compare their responses to the responses of others.

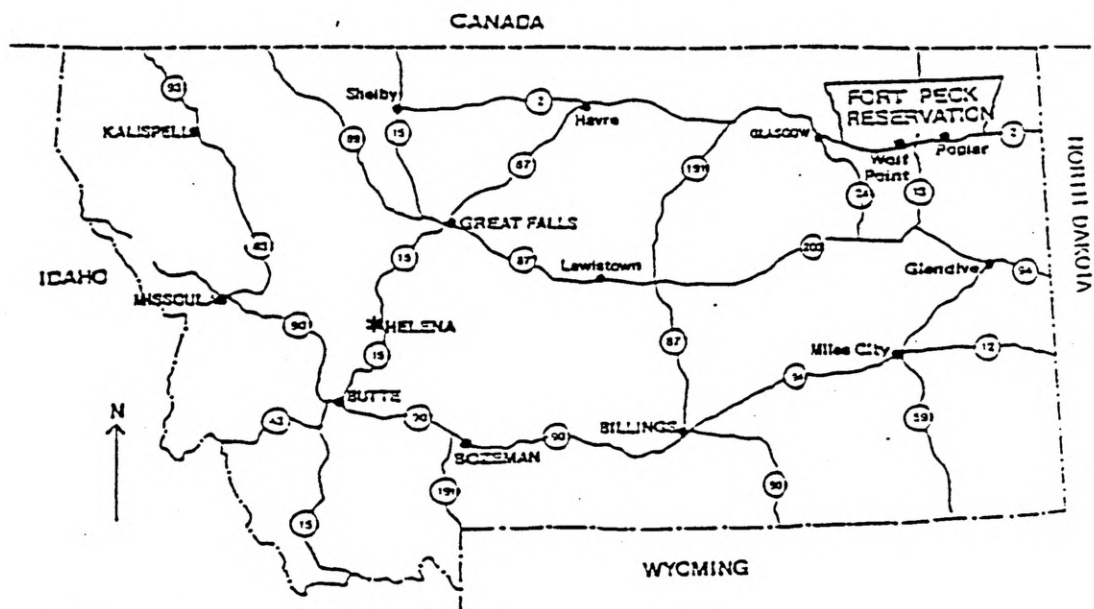
Recommendations for Further Study

Based upon the findings of this study, further research in the following areas is recommended:

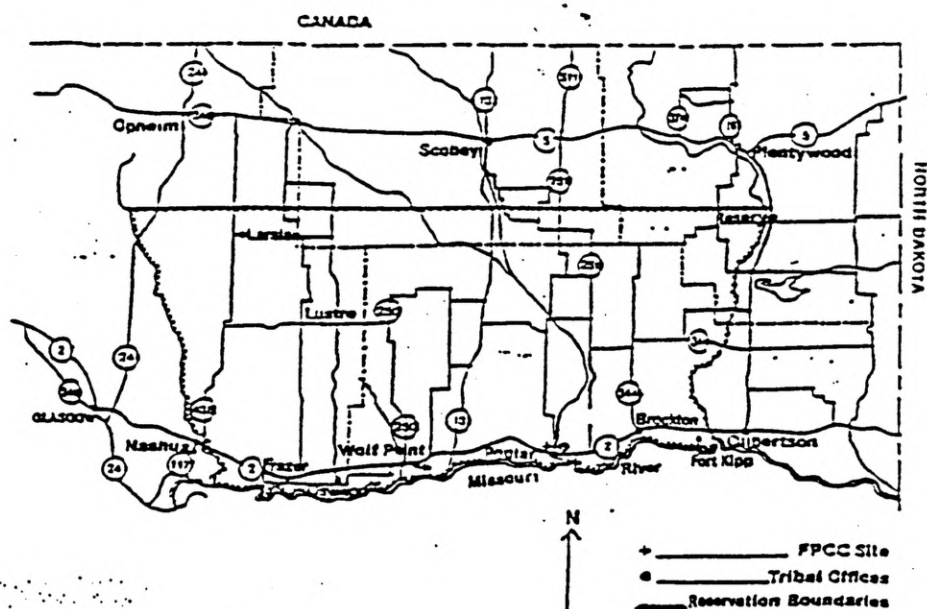
1. A more extensive study should be conducted involving Government agencies concerning:
 - a. what's their criteria for selecting workshops,
 - b. who recommends where their workshops are to be taken,
 - c. the number of government employees and staff who have attended workshops out-of-state,
 - d. and, the feasibility for Fort Peck Community College to offer similar workshops.
2. A study should be conducted to find out why Shorthand/stenography was considered not important.
3. An internal survey of all curricula at Fort Peck Community College could be taken concerning the extent to which human relations, spelling/grammar/and punctuation, computer, mathematical, organizational, written and oral communication skills are incorporated into the classroom.

APPENDIX A

STATE OF MONTANA



FORT PECK INDIAN RESERVATION



APPENDIX B

PRESS RELEASE

August 7, 1989

by Sharon Kolstad

During the week of August 14, a one-page survey will be mailed to a random sample of reservation small businesses employing entry-level office workers. The survey is part of a research project being conducted by Sharon Kolstad, A Fort Peck Community College business instructor. The survey will be comprehensive in nature, covering both technical and nontechnical skills. The purpose of this study is to collect data on what skills employers prefer an entry-level word processor/secretary possess. The results of the survey will be used to up-date and improve not only the business curriculum at Fort Peck Community College but to assist curriculum writing staff in other secondary and post-secondary institutions.

If you are one of the selected businesses, please take time to complete the survey. Only through receiving a high percentage of returns will we get any valid findings.

APPENDIX C

August 18, 1989

^F1^
^F2^
^F3^

Dear ^F4^:

As a business instructor at the Fort Peck Community College, I am interested in finding out if we are training our business education students to meet the needs of employers. As an employer of office workers, you are in a position to give us that valuable information. The results of this survey will be used to up-date and improve the business curriculum at Fort Peck Community College.

The enclosed one-page survey covers skills you prefer an entry-level word processor/secretary possess. It should take only a few minutes of your time! Please think carefully about each question and then check the appropriate response. Your honest opinion is valued and will help! Please return the survey to me in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by September 1, 1989.

Your name and the name of your business will not be used when compiling the data. All information will remain confidential. The results of this survey will be made available to all secondary and post-secondary institutions to assist curriculum writing staff in improving its existing word processing/secretarial programs, and for your participation, a copy will be made available to you.

I hope that you will take the effort to complete this survey. Only a sample of reservation businesses was selected so the greater the survey returns, the more valid the findings.

Thank you for your cooperation in this project.

Sincerely,

Sharon Kolstad

Enclosure

**FORT PECK COMMUNITY COLLEGE
QUESTIONNAIRE ON ENTRY-LEVEL SKILLS
FOR WORD PROCESSORS/SECRETARIES**

46

Please respond to all items by indicating how important you believe each skill is for an entry-level word processor/secretary to possess in your business. The only correct answer is the one which actually represents how important you believe the skills are for your specific business. In each case, check (✓) the box which represents your own reaction using the following scale:

VI is very important	NI is not important
I is important	N/A is not applicable to my business
LI is of limited importance	

1. How many employees does your business have? _____
2. How many employees in your business utilize word processing/secretarial skills? _____
3. Are you familiar with the business education course offerings at Fort Peck Community College? _____
4. Have you utilized the services provided by Fort Peck Community College for training/retraining of yourself or staff? _____
5. Are any of your employees graduates of Fort Peck Community College? _____

Rate the importance of the following computer skills for an entry-level word processor/secretary in your business.

	VI	I	LI	NI	N/A
6. Keyboarding/typing accuracy skills					
7. Keyboarding/typing speed skills					
8. Word processing skills					
9. Dictation machine operation skills while typing on a word processor					
10. Personal computer operating system skills					
11. Computerized spreadsheet skills					
12. Data base management skills					
13. Electronic mail system skills					
14. Computerized graphics/charting program skills					
15. Desktop publishing skills (layout, typesetting)					
16. Other: (please be specific)					
17. Other: (please be specific)					
18. Other: (please be specific)					

Rate the importance of the following general office skills for an entry-level word processor/secretary in your business.

	VI	I	LI	NI	N/A
19. Human relations skills					
20. Spelling/grammar/punctuation skills					
21. Shorthand/stenocript skills					
22. Letter/memo composition skills					
23. Proofreading skills					
24. Records/file management skills					
25. General arithmetic skills					
26. Electronic calculator skills					
27. Computerized accounting skills					
28. Ability to operate general office machines (photocopier, phone system, etc.)					
29. Other: (please be specific)					
30. Other: (please be specific)					
31. Other: (please be specific)					

Original survey provided by Ms. Ellyn M. Dickmann, a part-time instructor at Front Range Community College and supervisor of the Word Information Center for Poudre School District R-1 in Fort Collins, CO 80521.

S# _____ []

APPENDIX E

September 15, 1989

^F1^
^F2^
^F3^

Dear ^F4^:

On August 17, 1989, you were sent a one-page questionnaire pertaining to the office skills an entry-level word processor/secretary to possess. As of this date, I have not received your completed questionnaire. Was it possible it was forgotten, mislaid, or thrown away?

This survey has been sent to businesses on the reservation only. Because the sample size is small to begin with, your opinion and response is essential to validate the findings. Please take the short time necessary to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return your reply to me in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by September 25, 1989.

Your opinion is important and, in addition, will be treated in a confidential manner.

Sincerely,

Ms. Sharon Kolstad
Business Instructor

Enclosures

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