

Employer Satisfaction Survey: FY23 Results

Context

Near the beginning of the 2022 calendar year, a group of stakeholders at Hennepin Technical College met to discuss the institution's employer satisfaction survey. In the past, this survey had been administered by the Student Life and Career Development team. However, due to retirements and other institutional obligations, the survey had not been conducted in several years. The team developed a new process whereby employers would be asked questions about the skills and preparation Hennepin Technical College graduates had been given and the overall quality of the graduates as workers. Fiscal Year 2023 was chosen as the first year to administer the new iteration of the survey.

This survey – and the results discussed herein – aligns with an institutional commitment to ensure high quality education to its students. As part of Hennepin Technical College's ongoing accreditation efforts, this survey is considered to be in alignment with Criterion 4 of the Higher Learning Commission which examines an institution's teaching and learning. In specific, Core Component 4.A – which pertains to an institution ensuring the quality of its education offerings – has a sub-component which focuses on evaluating the success of graduates to ensure that the credentials it represents as preparation for employment fulfills this purpose. This survey serves as an indirect measure of the success of our students in terms of their preparation for employment as rated by their employers.

Methods

The Institutional Research team created a list of potential employers from two sources. First, employers listed by students via results from the Graduate Follow-Up Survey were included. Second, Institutional Research worked with administrative assistants to collate a list of employers serving on Program Advisory Committees across campus. In sum, 322 individuals and/or companies were listed from these two sources. The Institutional Research team took one of two approaches when reaching out to these 322 contacts. If an email address had been listed, the Institutional Research team emailed the individual (or company email) directly to request participation in the survey. If no email address had been made available, the Institutional Research team went to the company website, submitted a form request, and within the form asked the company to participate in the survey. Individuals were initially invited to participate on the first Monday of October. The survey remained open for data collection until the first Monday in December. The complete survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

Results

The response rate was 9.3% as a total of 30 responses were collected from the 322 individuals and/or companies contacted. Although this may seem small, response rates of 5%-10% are not uncommon when a "cold call" approach is taken via email/form submission. To be considered statistically representative of a population, data sets should have at least 30 responses. The research team hit this number exactly and, therefore, we can extrapolate these findings to fit the general population of 2022 HTC graduates.

Responses were overwhelmingly positive (Table 1). For 13 of the 16 skills employers were asked to rate, a majority of respondents rated our students as performing "Very Well" for the metric. The "Very Well" option was the best option listed on the Likert scale. This demonstrates that our students are commonly performing strongly in the areas the institution and employers deem most important.

The one area with the strongest performance by students, based on employers who rated student skills either "Very Well" or "Well," was with regard to exhibiting a positive work attitude. In sum, 92.6% of employers held this viewpoint. Three skills tied for the worst ratings from employers, though it should be noted that only 10.3% of employers thought these skills needed improvement based on those who rated our student performance as either "Poor" or "Very Poor." The three areas were as follows:

- Communicates well orally
- Exhibits critical thinking/problem-solving skills

- Pays attention to job details

The first two areas align with Hennepin Technical College Learner Outcomes (“HTC LOs”); these are skills the college expects all students to attain regardless of the program and regardless of the level of the award (certificate, diploma, or degree). During a faculty workshop day in November 2022, the institution committed to assessing HTC LOs in all general education courses and in at least five courses taught by individual technical program faculty members each semester. Moving forward, the institution is committed to reflecting on student performance in these areas and these results will be corroborated with future iterations of the employer satisfaction survey to determine if improvements are being made.

Table 1 Response Distribution to Survey Questions

Metric	Very Well	Well	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Produces quality work	58.6%	27.6%	10.3%	0.0%	3.4%
Uses technology (tools, equipment) properly/safely	55.2%	31.0%	10.3%	0.0%	3.4%
Applies environmental health and safety regulations	58.6%	27.6%	13.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Communicates well orally	58.6%	17.2%	13.8%	10.3%	0.0%
Communicates well in writing	40.7%	33.3%	18.5%	7.4%	0.0%
Demonstrates necessary math skills	44.4%	37.0%	14.8%	0.0%	3.7%
Demonstrates necessary computer skills	53.6%	32.1%	10.7%	0.0%	3.6%
Exhibits critical thinking/problem-solving skills	58.6%	17.2%	13.8%	6.9%	3.4%
Demonstrates community/global awareness	46.2%	30.8%	19.2%	0.0%	3.8%
Follows job-related rules and regulations	63.0%	25.9%	7.4%	0.0%	3.7%
Follows instructions	58.6%	20.7%	17.2%	0.0%	3.7%
Pays attention to job details	62.1%	20.7%	6.9%	3.4%	6.9%
Shows initiative	64.3%	17.9%	14.3%	0.0%	3.6%
Accepts responsibility	64.3%	25.0%	7.1%	0.0%	3.6%
Exhibits a positive work attitude	66.7%	25.9%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%
To what degree do the skills/abilities match your needs?	64.3%	21.4%	10.7%	0.0%	3.6%
	Yes	No			
Would you hire an HTC graduate again?	93.1%	6.9%			

Green shading: highest rated skill by respondents
 Red shading: lowest rated skill by respondents (three-way tie)

Respondents were asked to identify the job title(s) held by the HTC graduate(s) at their companies (Table 2). Graduates held an array of titles. Most commonly, students were hired as a “Technician,” though it should be noted that several industries have this job title and these students were not necessarily all employed in the same sector.

Table 2 Job Titles on which Employers Rated Hennepin Technical College Graduates

Job Title	Number
Technician	14
Carpenter	2
Machinist	2
Account Manager	1
Apprentice	1
Technical Arborist	1
Cabinetmaker	1
Engineer	1
Framer	1
HVAC	1
Mechanic	1
Service	1

At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were invited to add any additional comments they may have had about the survey or the HTC graduates they hired. Only a handful of participants engaged with this question. Nonetheless, responses were positive and centered upon the theme that the institution produces exceptional graduates:

- “Could not ask for a more conscientious employee”
- “Great program that produces exceptional” graduates
- “I’ve been nothing short of impressed with the HTC graduates I’ve worked with; they are hardworking and capable.”
- “Students are awesome...keep them coming!”
- “This is a great program teaching needed skills!”
- HTC grads have “a strong work ethic, they care about what they do, they care about the customer, and they continue to be trainable.”

Future Improvements

This employer satisfaction survey can be improved in several ways. First, additional responses would provide a more robust picture of graduates’ abilities. Although the 30 responses are enough to be extrapolated to fit the entire population of our graduates, when broken down by specific job role, none are representative for an individual job title/industry skill. Having more employers engage with the survey would provide better insight into the skills we provide to specific industries. Second, when the survey was sent to respondents, the Institutional Research team fielded many inquiries asking which specific graduate should be rated by the employer. Due to legislation surrounding data practices, the Institutional Research team could not provide this information about the specific graduate to the employer. Moving forward, in the email/form sent to employers, Institutional Research should be more explicit about its inability to provide this information. This will save back-and-forth-email-exchange time for both the employer and the college as the two groups engage with this survey. Third, this was the first year in which the newest iteration of the survey was administered. Therefore, Fiscal Year 2023 will serve as the baseline, moving forward, by which progress and comparisons will be made. At present, there are no prior data points to determine if graduate skills have improved or regressed in certain areas. In the future, we will use Fiscal Year 2023 results to track trends in student abilities.

Lastly, an overarching recommendation is for instructors and staff alike to focus on the three weakest areas over the coming year. Issues with oral communication, critical thinking skills, and paying attention to detail were identified as those skills in need of the most improvement. The school has already committed to measuring two of these three areas in-depth over the current school year. When the Fiscal Year 2024 results from this survey are collected, attention should be paid to these three skills to determine if the efforts translated to demonstrable change in student skills (as rated by employers).

Appendix A Survey Instrument



Program Name:

EMPLOYER SATISFACTION SURVEY OF HENNEPIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE GRADUATES

The purpose of this survey is to learn how employers rate the skills of students who have graduated from Hennepin Technical College (HTC). Results of this survey will be used to improve instruction and/or curriculum at the college. Considering HTC graduates you have hired in the past year, please circle the appropriate ranking of their **entry-level** knowledge, skills and behaviors as listed below. If you have hired multiple HTC graduates, **please average your ratings.**

Skill	Very Well	Well	Average	Poor	Very Poor	N/A
Produces quality work	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Uses technology (tools, equipment) properly/safely	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Applies environmental health and safety regulations	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Communicates well orally	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Communicates well in writing	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Demonstrates necessary math skills	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Demonstrates necessary computer skills	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Exhibits critical thinking/problem-solving skills	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Demonstrates community/global awareness	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Follows job-related rules and regulations	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Follows instructions	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Pays attention to job details	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Shows initiative	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Accepts responsibility	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Exhibits a positive work attitude	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
To what degree do the skills/abilities match your needs?	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

Overall Rating – Would you hire an HTC graduate again?

Yes

No

Please tell us which company you are representing. [text box for response]

For those hired in the last year, what job title(s) do the HTC graduates have at your organization? [text box for response]

Please use the back of this sheet if you wish to clarify or expand on your ratings. Thank you for completing this survey!