



**APEX**  
EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAMS

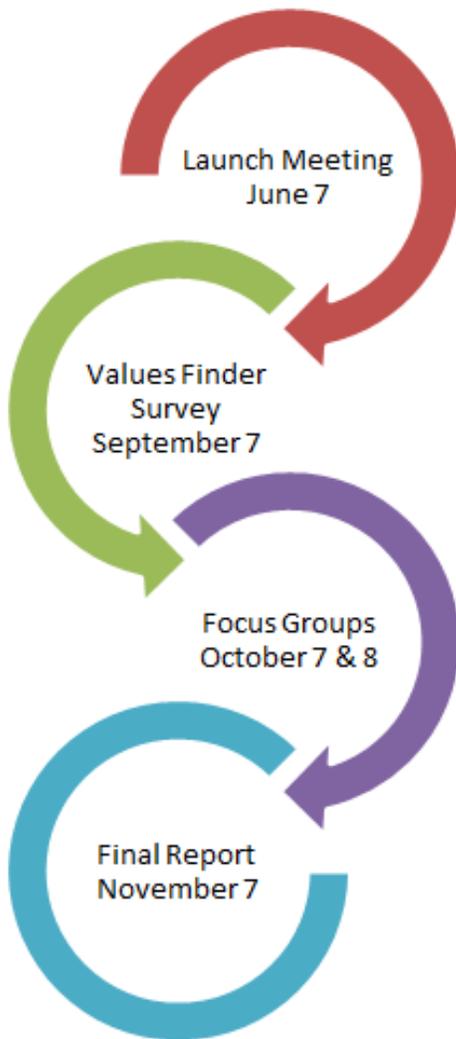
Final Report  
Southeast Missouri State University

November 7, 2013

## Scope of the Project

APEX Educational Programs was engaged by Southeast Missouri State University to study the issue of school spirit on campus through data obtained from surveys and targeted focus groups. These data were used to create actionable recommendations that are low cost or revenue neutral and can be accomplished with existing staff.

The project occurred in four phases:



**Phase 1** – A launch meeting was held with key stakeholders to establish baseline data and establish expectations about regarding the project. This was held in Cape Girardeau on June 7, 2013.

**Phase 2** – The Values Finder Survey was launched on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013. There were 2,240 respondents to the survey between September 8, 2013 and September 26, 2013. A total of 1,712 respondents answered all questions for a completion rate of 76.4%. A preliminary report of the information from the Values Finder survey was sent on October 4, 2013.

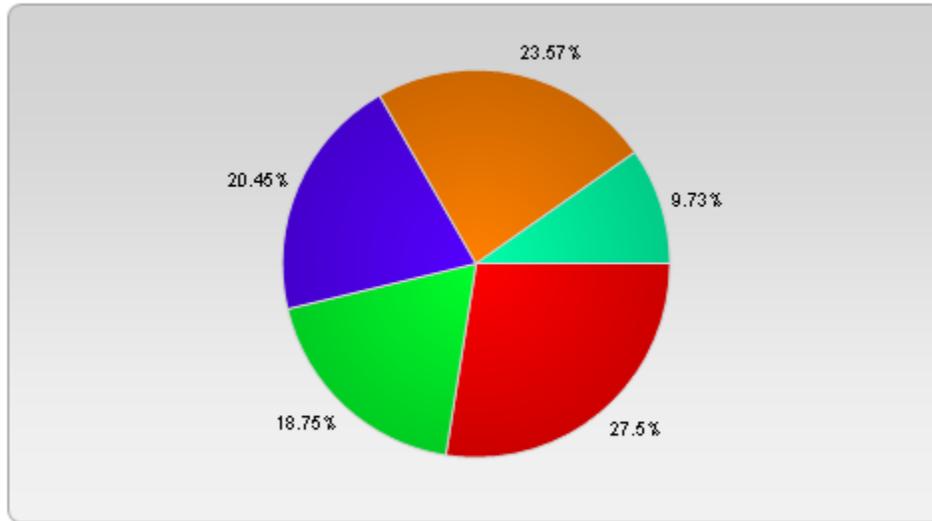
**Phase 3** – Focus groups were held on campus on October 7 – 8, 2013. Focus groups were intended to collect qualitative data about school spirit, to test themes found in the Values Finder survey and to conduct some preliminary solutions testing. Meetings were held with Executive Administrations, Student Affairs staff, Admissions staff, Student Leaders, Alumni Affairs, Athletics and other key stakeholders.

**Phase 4** – Final Report. The final report is contained within this document.

## Phase 2 - Values Finder

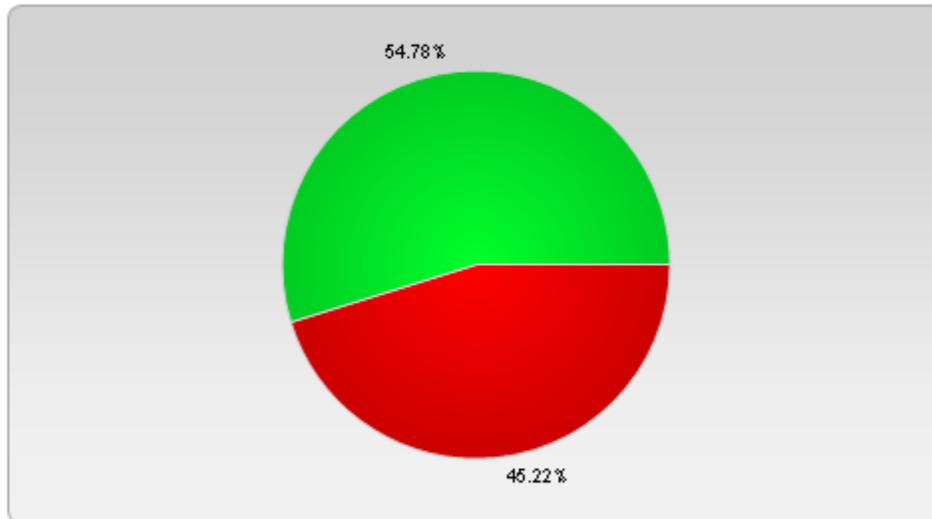
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Q1. What year are you?



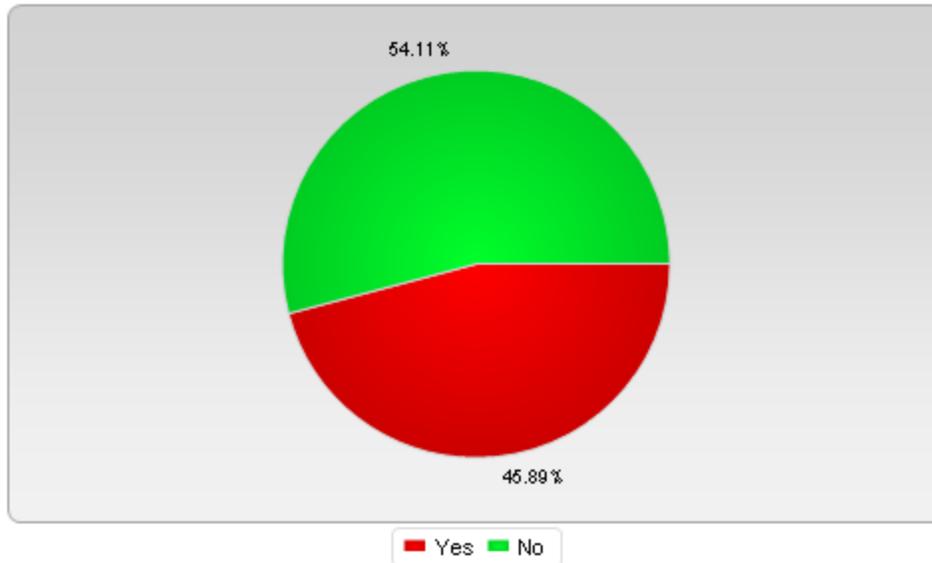
■ Freshman ■ Sophomore ■ Junior ■ Senior ■ Graduate student

Q2. This year, have you participated in any clubs or organizations?

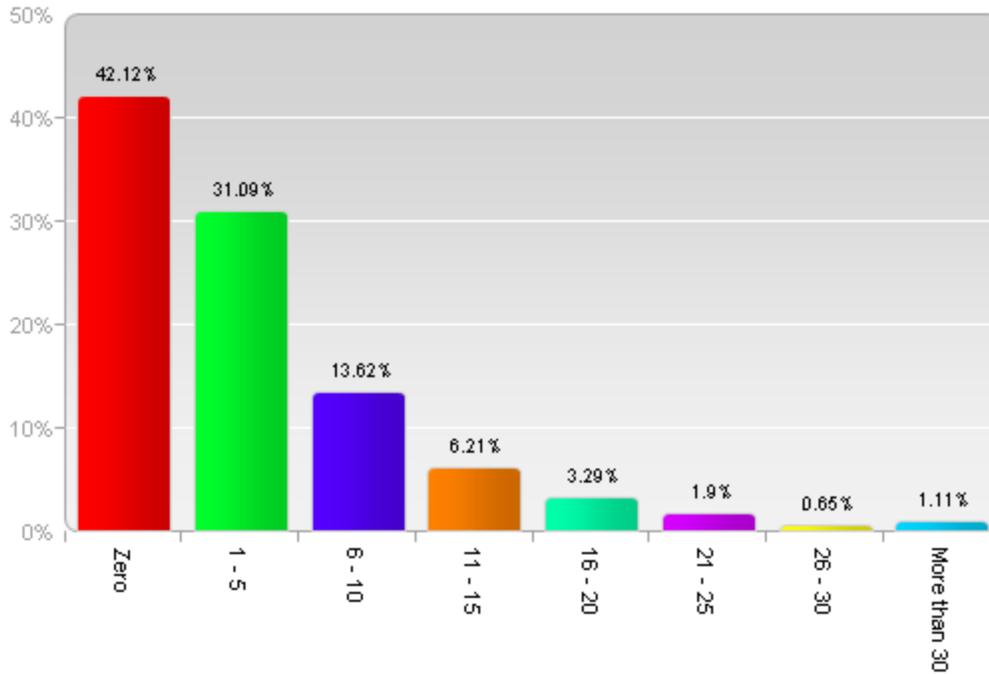


■ Yes ■ No

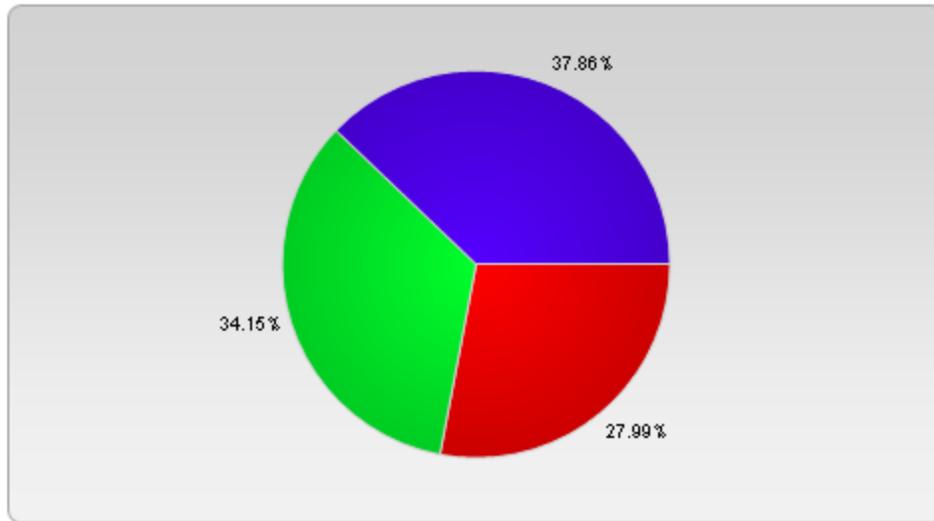
Q3. Have you been an officer/leader in any student organizations, publications, fraternities/sororities or academic groups or honor societies?



Q4. About how many hours per week do you spend participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)?

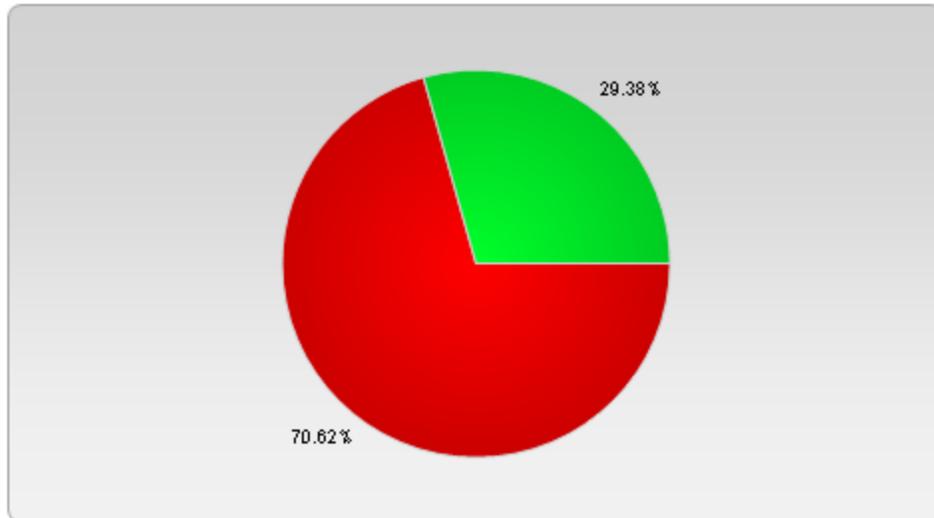


Q5. How would you describe your PARENT'S education?



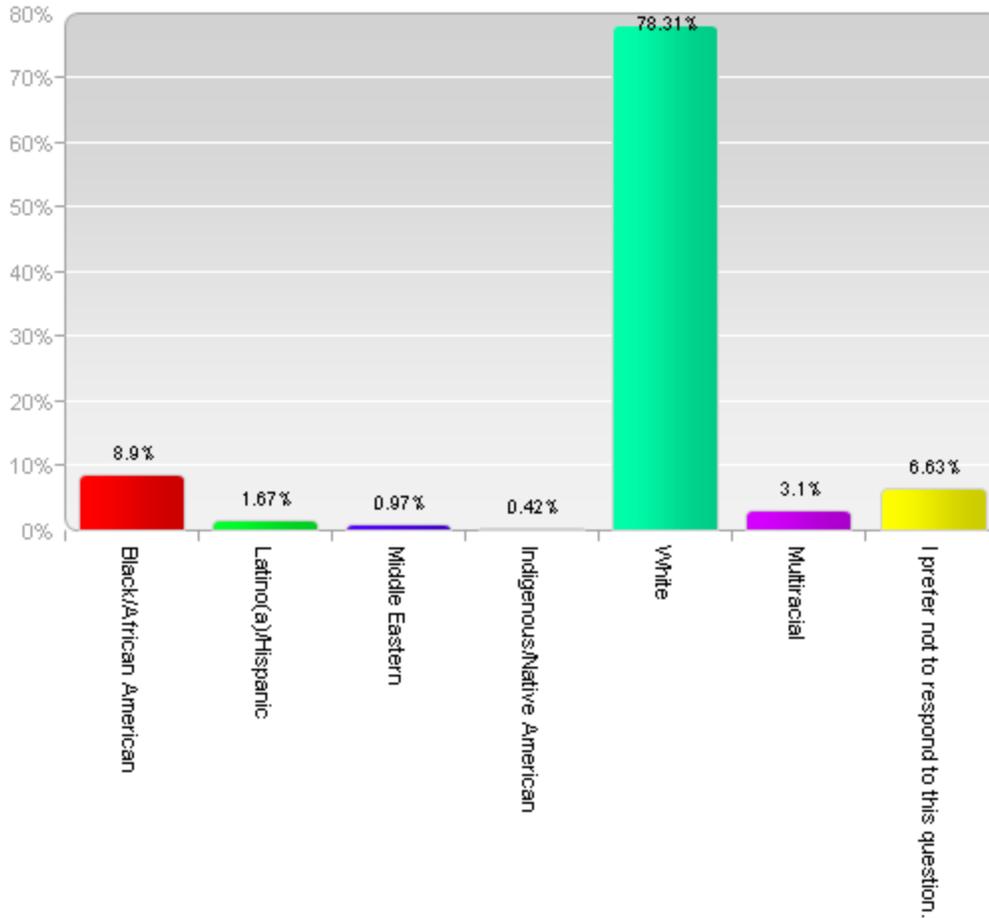
- Both completed a two or four year college degree
- One completed a two or four year college degree
- Neither completed a two or four year college degree

Q6. What is your gender?



- Female
- Male

Q7. What best describes your ethnicity?



### **Qualitative Data**

#### **In a few words, why did you choose to attend Southeast Missouri State University? (Prevailing Themes)**

- Academic Program Available
- Affordability
- Positive Reputation/Academic Quality/Quality of Faculty and Staff
- Friend/Family Connection
- Distance from Home (close to home, just far enough away, etc.)
- Caring/Friendly Environment
- Financial Aid
- Online Classes
- Cocurricular Involvement
- Size of School/Size of Classes
- Safety
- City of Cape Girardeau
- Beautiful Campus
- Quality of Academic Facilities (River Campus/Art Campus)

Self-Improvement  
Acceptance into School/Program  
Student Support Services  
Satellite Campuses

"A few of my family members attended SEMO and said that they enjoyed everything about it so I decided to attend SEMO as well."

"A friend told me how wonderful the school was and so I chose to come to Southeast."

"All of my siblings are graduates from SEMO, and it was close to home so I could keep current job and attend school."

"All of the staff is extremely helpful and kind. The cost is affordable. The campus is beautiful and well-organized."

"Because I started out as an education major and SEMO is well known for their education program amongst MO teachers."

"Because it was the closest one to home, and I know they have a good nursing program."

"Because my family is very poor, and I want to have a better home life for my children."

"Because the institution offered the course I wanted to pursue. The college is one of the safest colleges in the US and lastly being an international student, the college is affordable compared to most of the other colleges."

"Before I attended Southeast Missouri State I had heard nothing but great things about this school. When I was accepted, my family and I had help all along the way to the time I started school. Southeast cares about its students and their involvement on campus, they truly make it feel like home here on their campus."

"I chose to attend SEMO because of the unique opportunity to participate in undergraduate research in the biology department. The cheap book rentals and smaller class sizes compared to my old college were also benefits considered when applying. Of course the tuition cost is much cheaper than many other schools, but more expensive than my last."

"Because I came here for football and now I am involved in a fraternity so I am always busy."

"I got a good scholarship here and was able to be away from home while still being close enough to go home if I need to."

"I love the proximity from home; it's only 2.5 hours away. The tuition wasn't outrageous and I did receive scholarships. Also, it isn't too large and it isn't too small. I just love the atmosphere. I love having my dorm window look out to the football field. The campus is

beautiful, class sizes aren't too large, and the campus is just big enough to satisfy me. I also like the Greek life. It isn't as big as like Mizzou but it's not as small as like SIUE."

### **Why do you think people choose to leave Southeast Missouri State University? (Prevailing Themes)**

Financial Reasons/Cost/Financial Aid  
Academic Programs Unavailable/Not accepted into program  
Academic Advising  
Academic Failure  
Parking  
Location/Cape Girardeau  
Insufficient Events/Lack of Involvement/School Spirit  
Campus/Facilities  
Academic Reputation  
Home Sickness/Not Making Friends  
Lack of Options for those Under 21  
Lack of Commitment to Higher Education  
Size of Institution/City (too big or too small)  
Perceived High Acceptance Rate/Low Admission Requirements  
Insufficient Involvement for Non-Greek Affiliated Students  
Failure to Connect with Faculty or Staff  
Acceptance into Aspirational Institution  
Failure to Adjust/Transition to College  
Confused/Overwhelmed  
Party too much  
Lack of Initiative/Motivation/Effort

"I just transferred to SEMO but I would say the best thing about it is that there is always something going on. I haven't been bored since school started and don't see myself being bored anytime soon. I also like the smaller class sizes and that all of my teachers know my name."

"A lot of people probably chose to leave because they are homesick or because they feel like community college would be better for them."

"At this time I would not have a ready answer. In this day and age however, coupled with the economy I would say the choice to leave who have had to have been a money one."

"Because of the HORRIBLE PARKING!"

"Because they aren't dedicated enough to their school work, are home sick, or want a bigger university atmosphere."

"Because they either don't like Cape or they don't get involved enough on campus to enjoy their college experience."

“Because they end up partying too much. Allot (sic) of people get caught up in the wild life.”

“Bigger campus experience like Mizzou's football. Or to be closer to home.”

“Campus may be too small. I'm not sure. Everyone I talk to loves it here.”

“Can't handle the time management it takes to do well in your classes.”

“Cape Girardeau is a relatively small town, and people who are here want to go to a larger town.”

“Lack of the 'traditional' college experience.”

“Couldn't keep up with academics and extra-curricular activities.”

“Honestly there is not much to do unless you are 21.”

“Homesickness. Feeling out of place. Overwhelmed with Greek organizations.”

“I am not quite sure why someone would want to leave this institution. Most people that I know personally leave for other reasons than school.”

### **What is the best thing about Southeast Missouri State University?**

#### **(Prevailing Themes)**

Faculty and Staff

Online Courses

Class Sizes/Right Size

Quantity and Variety of Activities

Affordability

Beautiful Campus

Friends

Support Services/Resources for Student Success

Fitness/Intramurals

Athletics Participation or Attendance

Safety

Greek Life

Book Rental

Caring/Friendly Environment

Size of School/Size of Classes

Distance from Home (close to home, just far enough away, etc.)

Convenience

Specific Academic Program

Everything!

Family

Facilities/Residential Facilities

Campus Life and Organizations

Hands-On Learning  
Close/Tight-knit community

“99% of my teachers have been incredible. They take the time to get to know the students. This is possible due to the average class size and their much admired and appreciated enthusiasm.”

“Activities are a wide variety anywhere from First Year Leadership program to rock climbing!”

“All of the faculty and students here are very nice, the dorms are very nice, it is a really nice campus.”

“All the buildings are in walking distance, and the classrooms are relatively small.”

“All the clubs and stuff to do. In between classes i (sic) can always find a student lounge (They are everywhere) and do homework or surf the web. And the clubs allow me to try new things such as Judo and fencing.”

“Availability. If I want to take a class in my degree program online, I take it online. If I am concerned that I may need more one on one attention, I take it on campus. If I need help in the bookstore or at parking services, no one hesitates to go out of their way. Teachers seem to have an interest in their students and make themselves available.”

“Being Greek and having an entire brotherhood to turn to and spend time with. There's never a dull moment.”

“Greek Life! As well as getting my education I am lucky enough to have a great group of sisters to support me and give me extra opportunities. Even if I were to hate multiple things about SEMO I think my sisters would keep me coming back.”

“Class size and the opportunities for interaction with faculty and students both inside and outside of the classroom.”

“Convenience of being close to home and everyone I have met that work at the school has been really nice and helpful.”

“I just transferred to SEMO but I would say the best thing about it is that there is always something going on. I haven't been bored since school started and don't see myself being bored anytime soon. I also like the smaller class sizes and that all of my teachers know my name.”

“I like the diversity of this campus and the numerous activities it offers for non-athletes, and non-Greek life.”

"I love the community at my school. I like that my classes are never too big, so I can get to know people in the classes and I also like that the teacher can be interactive with the class."

"Distance from home. I can be home quick for emergencies, but I'm also far enough away to have to stay at Cape Girardeau."

"Everyone is friendly here, and you don't run into that everywhere. The landscape is definitely high up there too though, as well as good teachers and the variety of extracurricular activities to choose from."

"Fairly cheap, great networking opportunities. I'm getting internships and offered jobs already, and I haven't even completed my degree. It is very good about getting you a job in the area you want your job/career."

"The best thing about Southeast Missouri State University is the amount of majors and minors offered to each student. This is very desirable to students who are not exactly sure what field they want to be in because the options are almost limitless."

"The best thing about the institution is the people and how welcoming the feel of not only the campus, but the whole city of Cape Girardeau is."

"The best thing about this institution is that it is close to my home so that I can go home every weekend, it is affordable, and it isn't overwhelmingly big."

"The diversity of the students, programs and faculty members; there's always something to learn from somebody."

"The Greek life here at SEMO is incredible."

### **What (if anything) embarrasses you about Southeast Missouri State University? (Prevailing Themes)**

Nothing (overwhelming choice)

Perceived High Acceptance Rate/Low Admission Requirements

Greek Life/Lack of Greek Unity/Overemphasis on Greek Life

Construction

Partying School/Drinking

Athletic Success/Football Team/Lack of Support for Athletics

Dearmont

Academic Reputation

Parking

Lack of School Spirit

Lack of Diversity/Inclusion

Mascot, Rowdy (resentment of mascot change)

Quality of Faculty

Political Ideologies of Student and Staff

Facilities/Construction

## Landscaping

“Nothing about my institution embarrasses me.”

“When people who don't attend this institution talk badly about it, I don't understand what their judgment is based on. There are some people here (myself included) who feel a lot of pride in being here. The opinions about this school are so black and white.”

“97% acceptance rate.”

“Nothing about SEMO embarrasses me really, but what annoys is how so many students will put the university down and complain about it. In my opinion, students should realize that affordability comes at a price and should either accept that an affordable school won't be just like Harvard, or they should go somewhere else and pay the higher tuition rates.”

“One thing that is embarrassing to me is the Greek life system at SEMO. Everyone worships them like they are gods! I know they do community work and other good things, but seriously whenever a whole fraternity or sorority comes back drunk from like Slingers acting really stupid and inappropriate that is really embarrassing! I feel like more people give them credit than they should.”

“Nearly everyone here (upperclassman mostly, probably in their attempts to make us want to stay) seemed almost too giddy with excitement. No one can maintain that demeanor for that long naturally about anything.”

“Our athletics program has not been what it was in many years past.”

“Being politically correct. I believe the Indian mascot was perfectly acceptable.”

“Our mascot, Rowdy, is pathetic.”

“Our athletics. It's a big deal at other schools to go to a football game or baseball game. The only way you can get us there now is if free stuff is offered.”

“Lack of school spirit at our sporting events.”

“People always ask me where SEMO/Cape Girardeau is. I wish more people knew it. They don't consider it a "legit" school because they aren't familiar with it.”

“Simple things like better parking to accommodate student needs better and just more convenience for students for things such as parking, more and healthier on campus dining, and better renovated dorms.”

“There's always construction, which I know is making the campus better but it also is distracting and makes it more difficult to get around campus.”

“Smashed glass. It is no secret that people drink on and around campus, I have no problem with people drinking JUST PICK UP YOUR BOTTLES!!!”

“Sometimes the Greek Life here embarrasses me, but maybe that's just because I'm a GDI.”

“That visiting Slinger's on a Thursday night is a tradition and that if you are not indulging in drinking and other types of that behavior whether under age or of age, you are somewhat on the outside no matter your age.”

“The actions or overheard stories of some of the fraternity and sorority members. Some of them have a snobbish air at the fact that you are not in a Greek house. It is a personal decision to join or not to join.”

“The area. Downtown Cape is finally picking up again, but it still doesn't have a lot to offer for a college town. And River campus is located in a rough looking spot of town.”

“The constant construction is an embarrassment. I know construction needs to happen to make the campus look nicer, but a lot of visiting or new students have negative comments to say about all the construction.”

“The Greek students and how our institution has a rule that for the first month of classes sorority girls are not allowed to talk to non-sorority girls.”

“The most embarrassing part about my institution is the parking situation. I spend \$150.00 on a parking pass, yet I still have problems finding a parking spot in the mornings.”

“The number one thing that embarrasses me is the major lack of school spirit. I probably see more people walking to class wearing other school's clothing than SEMO clothing. Attendance at sporting events is dwindling and everyone trashes the football team instead of encouraging them to improve.”

**What other school do you think is Southeast Missouri State University's biggest rival?**

Don't Know/None/Don't Care/Not Sure/No Clue/No Rival (204)

University of Missouri (Mizzou) (143)

Southern Illinois University – Carbondale (133)

Murray State University (82)

Missouri State University (81)

Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) (41)

Arkansas State University (26)

Sothern Illinois University – Edwardsville (24)

Other institutions mentioned:

Saint Louis University (16)

Truman State University (12)

University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) (10)

Eastern Illinois University (6)

Austin Peay State University (6)  
Missouri University of Science and Technology, Rolla (8)  
Morehead State University (3)  
Webster University (3)  
University of Missouri, Kansas City (3)  
Northwest Missouri State (2)

Interesting findings: The top vote getter was that students were not sure who the rival was. This doesn't even take into account the number of students who said that they were unsure and then listed an institution. Most students seemed to indicate that the University of Missouri is more an academic rival than an athletic rival or, perhaps an aspirational institution for students. There was a clear theme that many students felt they were supposed to say that Murray State is the rival school, but many seemed to indicate that they were saying Murray State was the rival because that is what they had heard. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale seemed to many students to be a more natural rival because of its geographic location and because the two institutions play a rivalry game in St. Louis. Two findings are particularly noteworthy in how unusual they are. First, the sheer number of schools listed seems to indicate how little agreement there is on schools in which Southeast Missouri State is in competition. It is also notable that a community college is listed as a rival (although this appeared to be connected with students studying at a particular satellite location).

#### Confluent Values

- Achievement (879)
- Success (831)
- Community (767)
- Positivity (758)
- Growth (738)
- Fun (702)
- Safety (664)
- Commitment (658)
- Enthusiasm (636)
- Making a Difference (620)
- Diversity (590)

#### Observations

- Students select Southeast Missouri State for practical reasons, and expect that others leave for practical reasons.
- There is an overall sense that fellow students are friendly and the university faculty and staff are deeply caring.
- Issues like the mascot have undertones of political ideologies.
- Because students perceive their experiences are very much personalized, when they have experiences that feel bureaucratic, they have an extreme reaction.
- Some students think that the reputation of Southeast Missouri State is that of a party school.

- Students are tired of construction.
- Greek Life is sometimes perceived as dominating student life, students stress the importance of getting involved. For those who do, they cite this involvement as a reason they themselves and others stay. When they don't they are likely to see the institution as lacking involvement opportunity and the city as being boring.
- The question of rivalry is usually interpreted as athletic; many in this survey interpreted rivalry as non-academic.
- The data will pull you back and forth; the thing one person says is the reason they came is the reason some people say they leave. You can disregard the valence. It's just a way of showing that it's important. If students feel one way about something, they may be more likely to stay. If they don't, they may go.

#### Testing Themes

- Do students view involvement outside of Greek Life as being lesser in some way?
- Discovering how students learn about spirit and traditions.
- Discovering how student learn about getting involved.
- Testing the "right size, right location" theme from qualitative data.
- Discovering how community service programming might impact feelings of connection to the city.
- Looking to see if the strong theme of "close to home" dampens student involvement.

## **Phase 3 – Stakeholder Focus Groups**

### **Methodology**

On October 7-8, 2013, focus groups and meetings with key stakeholders were held on campus. Meetings were generally one hour in length. The purpose of these meetings was to collect data regarding school spirit on campus, to develop themes and test potential solutions. At the end of the visit, the consultant had an understanding of the issues surrounding school spirit on campus and was able to use these findings to develop some potential solutions that are likely to have strong support from key stakeholder groups.

### **Statement of Issues**

ISSUE 1: Participation in experiences outside of the classroom appears to be low compared to similar institutions. In the survey, 42% of the students responding spent zero hours per week engaged in co-curricular experiences (defined in the question as “organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.”). In total, more than 73% of students spend five hours or less on these experiences.

ISSUE 2: Greek Life appears to be thriving and students can tell that it is valued by the institution. However, students who do not participate in Greek Life report to sometimes feeling as if they are not as valued. Homecoming, Greek Week and other campus events are times when this feels particularly observable to non-Greek students. There was also a frequent theme that it is harder to get involved in non-Greek organizations and harder for transfer students, older student and commuting students to get involved overall.

ISSUE 3: How a student feels about Cape Girardeau appears to influence their impression of their experiences at Southeast.

ISSUE 4: “Making a Difference” was a strong value for Southeast students. Yet, community service seems to occur only in pockets within the university. This may be a significant means of engagement to students and may benefit from increased emphasis and support.

ISSUE 5: The Center for Student Involvement’s location provides excellent space for student organizations to interact, but there is a common perception that the space is currently underutilized.

ISSUE 6: Students do not think they are knowledgeable about traditions and spirit on campus. Most tradition is passed along from peer to peer in informal ways. There may also be reason to believe that the transition from the previous mascot to the current mascot left some previous traditions disconnected or irrelevant without new traditions to replace them.

ISSUE 5: There is little agreement as to what other institution rivals Southeast. While students tended to know that Murray State was historically a rival, they indicated that the rivalry was hard to sustain during times in which Southeast was unlikely to defeat Murray

State in athletic contests. They also do not believe that Southeast is considered to be a major rival among students at Murray State. Another natural rival could be Southern Illinois University at Carbondale – however since this school is not in the same athletic conference this may be less practical. Building a strong rivalry and finding ways to communicate that to new and existing students can help strengthen the spirit at Southeast. While this rivalry will have strong athletic overtones, rivalry for better grades, bigger community service programs and other points of pride could also be included.

#### Observations:

- Signage on the large round stone structures along the sidewalk adjacent to the student center could provide a space for large banners to provide awareness and direction for students to find the Center for Student Involvement.
- The Center for Student Involvement name sounds academic and a little stiff. Selecting a more student-friendly name that demonstrated connection to the spirit brand may be beneficial. If this location is connected with an Involvement Advising program might lend itself well to playing up the CSI acronym (connected to the show CSI which features forensic investigators). For example taglines like, “Who are you?” or “CSI Cape: Find Yourself Here” might attract students.
- Banners referring to the Redhawk as a “new tradition” may be sending a mixed message to students. Tradition is intended to be old, and the new tradition may be seen as less authentic. Today’s student was likely 9 or 10 years old when the mascot changed. Deemphasizing the newness of the tradition may aid in increasing commitment to the current spirit brand.
- While there appears to be good data to suggest that students are working more than students at other schools, it is often cited by staff as a reason for low student involvement. This may be holding some back as it provides a simple and commonly accepted explanation for a lack of student engagement in programs or provides reason why efforts might be unsuccessful before they are even begun. Cost of events may also be used in a similar way.
- There may be advantages to coupling leadership programs with service programs. This may provide a means for expanding service offerings without adding additional staff.
- During the visit, the president mentioned a need to calculate service hours. A student organization portal such as Org Sync or Collegiate Link may be useful in increasing student leaders’ engagement with each other and provides a mechanism for capturing individual students’ service hours so they can be easily tracked. These make applications for the President’s Volunteer Service Award (given by the President of the United States each year) easier to manage and can earn recognition for students, validating their decision to serve.

- Students do not know the words to the Alma Mater and there are no words to the Fight Song. The connection to singing the Alma Mater at graduation may deemphasize learning it prior to the end of a student's time at Southeast. A high-level effort from upper administration to solicit input from pertinent faculty and students in writing words for the fight song could provide a new means of engagement. Efforts to teach new students the Alma Mater could also be beneficial.
- It is important that any efforts to raise the profile of non-Greek organizations be done in such a way that Greeks do not feel diminished. The engagement of Greek groups is currently a strong suit for Southeast.
- A social media presence for the mascot may increase feelings of connection. It is important that this is not used exclusively to convey information about events. Efforts should be made to create a personality for the mascot and to make it feel personal. Creating a Facebook, Twitter and Instagram following for "Red Hawk" and building a strong following may provide new ways to communicate with students.
- Many indicated that student-driven initiatives at Southeast tended to be supported better than initiatives that feel administratively driven.
- The Student Alumni Association appears to have a group of students who could be energized to create school spirit on campus. Creation of programs like a "class gift" may increase unity within each class and build pride in the institution.
- Some students saw incentives for athletic events as looking desperate. One said, "They have to con us into attending by giving us a t-shirt."
- SGA students expressed confidence in student-driven approaches to driving athletic attendance. Athletics could work with SGA's advisor to identify key events where increased attendance could be generated and have SGA approach other organizations to make this happen.
- The expression of Mizzou as a rival may be an effective way to leverage attendance for smaller sports where teams might be more likely to defeat Mizzou (women's soccer, volleyball, track, etc.).

### **Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1: Redhawk Roundup Student Leader Retreat**

The first step in creating spirit is to empower current student leaders to express their spirit. Secondly, there is a strong theme that current leaders are very excited about Southeast Missouri State, but don't know much about tradition. This retreat could be used to teach students about existing traditions, and (perhaps more importantly) to create NEW campus traditions. The traditions that this group creates are most likely to have the broadest support among these students. A top priority should be given to writing words to the school song. This could be done in consultation with faculty who may have expertise in this area.

This retreat should take place in the spring semester. It is very important that this retreat precede any transition camp or other significant spirit initiatives as it will be the basis of these experiences for new students. There was strong student support for this idea. In one focus group a student said, "That would be awesome!" A student in SGA said, "Do it!" Another said, "That would be the best idea ever!"

### Action Steps

STEP 1: Identify and secure a location for the retreat

STEP 2: Develop a process for selecting student leaders

STEP 3: Select student leaders

STEP 4: Develop desirable outcomes for the retreat

STEP 5: Create an itinerary and schedule for the retreat

STEP 6: Conduct the retreat

To find some information about planning retreats, visit:

[http://issuu.com/naca/docs/april\\_2011](http://issuu.com/naca/docs/april_2011)

### **Recommendation 2: Camp Redhawk**

While transition camps (TCs) have been in existence for some time among schools in the southern United States, they are just beginning to become more prevalent at northern schools. TCs are special orientation programs that inculcate new students in to the spirit and traditions of the university. They usually take place over the course of two to three days and are ideally held off campus. The reason many find it important to hold them off campus is that the remote location encourages bonding and discourages students from taking an "a la carte" approach to the camps, selecting certain events to attend and opting out of others.

Typical activities at a TC are learning the school song, learning cheers for sporting events, establishing the rivalry with another school and engaging in friendly competition that bonds students together. Students should be divided into small groups of 6-10 students and be connected with an upperclassman student or students who can facilitate the group. This student-to-student contact is essential as research has demonstrated that students express greater comfort in learning this kind of information from peers. The TC can also address more serious issues like homesickness and goal setting.

Another recommendation would be to divide the overall camp into two overall groups and have them compete in summer camp-type activities to win the "Redhawk Cup." These can

be silly and fun. Resist the temptation to make the games overly competitive. Washers, sand volleyball, relay races and egg tosses make great events. Students can also put on entertaining skits about campus traditions, institutional expectations and other things that it is important to teach new students.

For many new programs, it is wise to start small and scale up. Use some caution in this approach to TCs. If the group is too small, the students may feel inhibited due to having a higher level of visibility. For students to buy-in fully, they may need to feel less conspicuous and enjoy the benefits of membership in a larger group.

Again, students expressed support for this idea. An SGA student said, “I would definitely do that. I would pay for it for sure.” Some students did express concern as to what student’s tolerance would be for paying a fee to attend this event. If this is done, it would be wise to consider how value is impacted by a low cost. Students will base their perceptions of value at least partly on what price is placed on the event. If the price is low, students may assume it is of low value. Another way to approach this dilemma is to offer to students to students who have economic need (such as students who are eligible for Pell Grant).

Some good examples of TC programs are below. Their current pricing is also included:

Institution	Camp	Days/Price	Website
Texas A&M	Fish Camp	\$170/4 days	<a href="http://fishcamp.tamu.edu/">http://fishcamp.tamu.edu/</a>
Stephen F. Austin	Jack Camp	\$160/4 days	<a href="http://www.sfasu.edu/studentaffairs/95.asp">http://www.sfasu.edu/studentaffairs/95.asp</a>
University of Texas - Austin	Camp Texas	\$225/3 days	<a href="http://texasexes.org/camptexas/attend.asp">http://texasexes.org/camptexas/attend.asp</a>

### Action Steps

STEP 1: Identify and secure a location for the camp.

STEP 2: Establish a price point for the camp, establish a budget.

STEP 3: Develop a process for selecting student leaders.

STEP 4: Select and train student leaders.

STEP 5: Create marketing materials for the camp.

STEP 6: Determine the registration process, develop liability releases.

STEP 7: Create a detailed schedule for the purposes of conducting the camp, and a simplified version of the schedule to give to participants.

STEP 8: Market the camp to new students (personal appeals by student leaders at orientation are very effective – stress that students will make friends and that the camp is a step towards leadership on campus).

STEP 9: Implement the camps according to the detailed schedule.

### **Recommendation 3: Involvement Advisor Program**

In *Completing College*, Vincent Tinto (2012) called on institutions to create, “coherent pathways” and “align institutional action” for student success. This can be especially hard to do in student affairs in which a variety of exciting programs compete for students attention. Additionally, some of the ways that we seek to engage students in cocurricular programs do not engage all student populations. Clearly programs like involvement fairs which are common on college campuses are designed for extroverts; people who aren’t hesitant to break the ice with someone they don’t know.

In focus groups, a strong theme developed that students find it harder to get involved in non-Greek activities because they do not necessarily know how to engage with these groups. Additionally, there is a persistent belief that the Center for Student Involvement is not fully utilized.

An Involvement Center may be very helpful in addressing these concerns. An involvement center is a one-stop site for involvement on campus. Students may schedule Peer Involvement Advising sessions in which an involved student uses a discussion guide to determine the student’s interests, what they would like to learn from the experience and how much time they have to commit to co-curricular activities. They then match students with experiences that are suited to these interests. This goes beyond matching students with registered student organizations and has included connecting students to civic organizations, campus resources (such as financial aid, counseling services or campus police) or programs such as service programs, leadership development programs or campus recreation opportunities.

The Peer Involvement Advisors are the heart and soul of the program. They need to be specially trained to coach students in selecting involvement opportunities that are well-suited for each individual student. A session typically begins with an open ended question like, “Why do you want to get involved?” or “What do you hope to learn from this involvement?” This approach illustrates to each student that their co-curricular involvements should be a part of their overall learning experience before they even connect with a student organization.

The ideal location for the Involvement Advising program would be Center for Student Involvement (CSI) not only because the current layout would easily accommodate the program, but also because the program could enhance the current mission of the space: to assist student organizations. Peer Involvement Advising provides assistance to student organization in recruiting and engaging new members and also expands the number of students engaged in these activities to derive desirable institutional outcomes such as increased persistence and engagement of students.

The front desk would provide an attractive point of entry where students could be greeted and the cubical-style offices could provide a semi-private environment for involvement sessions to take place. There is a ground floor entrance to the space. Placing large, visible signage on the round stone structures outside of the entrance near the CSI could increase visibility and encourage traffic.

The project is not necessarily revenue neutral, but often student work dollars can be moved from areas in which these positions are not fully utilized. The program is not expensive to operate, requiring minimal supplies and materials.

#### Action Steps

STEP 1: Identify space for the Peer Involvement Advising Program.

STEP 2: Identify funding sources for the program.

STEP 3: Select advisors.

STEP 4: Train advisors.

STEP 5: Produce marketing materials.

STEP 6: Begin the program.

#### **Recommendation 4: Operation: Thank You, Cape (CAPE HEROS)**

A theme which developed in the Values Finder assessment was that service to others and making a difference was a strong value for Southeast students. Thus, campus-wide community service programs that are inviting to Greek and non-Greek students alike could be a significant way to increase feelings of school spirit on campus. SGA used to sponsor a similar event called "Southeast Gives Back." This was successful, but there was a perception among students that the program needed more top-down support. In meetings with key university leaders, it is clear that there is strong support for enhanced community service programs.

Another prevalent theme was that whether or not students felt a sense of connection with Cape Girardeau was an important indication of whether or not they would feel connected

to Southeast. By conducting a community service program that exposes students to people in the Cape Girardeau can foster a personal connection that can impact students' feelings of connectedness with the institution and the town.

The model for this program can be found at Texas A&M University. The program is called, "The BIG Event." Information can be found at the following web address: <http://bigevent.tamu.edu>. Programs based on this model are now held at more than 95 schools across the county and world. Students who participate do small projects throughout the city for any member of the community who requests it, regardless of need. These projects can be painting, yard work, cleaning or other small tasks not requiring the use of power tools.

One caution is that some mentioned that when students participated in "Southeast Gives Back" some did not feel like their service was valued. Enhancing the media presence could help this. It would also be wise to plan for ways to have city leaders show gratitude on behalf of the town.

### Action Steps

STEP 1: Secure the buy-in of multiple student organizations to participate in the program. Ensure that Greek Life is on-board, but take care not to make it look as though it is exclusively for Greek Students.

STEP 2: Recruit and select student leaders to manage the project. Ensure diversity within student organizations.

STEP 3: Work with city leaders such as the Chamber of Commerce, local news outlets and churches to help identify projects for students. The capacity of projects will largely determine the size of the program.

STEP 4: Identify special overflow projects that can accommodate large numbers of students in case more students participate than there is capacity to accommodate. Examples may include campus clean-up, clean-up and landscaping of nearby parks.

STEP 5: Market the program to students and student groups.

STEP 6: Assign students and student groups to projects.

STEP 7: Plan a kickoff program on the day of the event. Invite prominent campus leaders to attend and speak.

STEP 8: Send students out to projects.

STEP 9: Plan a program for the conclusion of the event. Engage in some reflective activity about the meaning of their service. For examples, visit the Service Learning website of the University of Minnesota at:

<http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/info/reflection.html#Ideas>



### Conclusions

From an outsider's perspective, it appears that any lack of spirit among today's students may be explained through looking at the transition from the previous mascot and identify to the new Redhawks mascot. While today's student was quite young when this transition occurred, the strong likelihood that a parent or other family member attended may also influence their opinions about it. Additionally, the transition is still touted on banners across campus as a "new tradition." This may be sending a somewhat equivocal signal to students. "New" and "Tradition" are contradictions in terms. In order to embrace a tradition, it's important that it feels like it has been around a while.

Additionally, when the change took place, many old traditions become either obsolete or taboo. Without a conscious process to develop new traditions to take their place, today's students know very little about the traditions of the past and know of very few traditions in general.

The recommendations in this proposal are designed to provide a systematic process for creating, disseminating and creating strong commitment to traditions new and old at Southeast Missouri State University. They also intend to create clear and coherent pathways to student involvement as a means of increasing engagement with students outside of the classroom. Additionally, by capitalizing on strong student values connected to service to others, the institution may have a means for addressing an important

bellwether issue for students that appears to play a role in whether not a student is satisfied with their experience at Southeast, namely – whether or not they feel connected to Cape Girardeau.

Each of these recommendations has steps for further action and should be able to be accomplished using existing resources.



## **Biography**

**Adam Peck, Ph.D.** serves as Assistant Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) in Nacogdoches, Texas. He also serves as graduate faculty in Student Affairs and adjunct faculty in the department of Communication and Contemporary Culture at SFA. He has worked in higher education for over seventeen years. Adam writes and speaks frequently on topics as varied as cultivating creativity, critical thinking and assessment methodologies.

He is the owner and principle consultant for APEX Educational Programs, LLC. The firm helps institutions of higher education to achieve their goals through values-based consulting. This approach is directed at discovering shared values and using these values to achieve desired change.

He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre from Lewis University (near Chicago, IL), a Master of Arts in Communication from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and a Doctor of Philosophy from The University of Texas at Austin in Educational Administration.