



Best Educational E-Practices (BEEP)

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Benchmarking St. Petersburg College: A Report to Leadership

Project Eagle Evaluation Question #6

www.spjc.edu/eagle/PEEQ6.pdf (242k)

How Can St. Petersburg College Parlay Its Good Work and Success with Project Eagle into a National Model?

Executive Summary

www.spjc.edu/eagle/BEEP/BEEP22.htm

“Seldom is there time to identify a ‘best practice,’ ...design instructional materials, train the trainers, and schedule, deliver, test, and certify the outcome. By the time the process is complete, a ‘better practice’ will have evolved....”

(David G. Burnett, in [Postbaccalaureate Futures](#), 2000)

Introduction

In 1999, [St. Petersburg College](#) (SPC) received a multi-year federal grant ([Project Eagle](#)) to build a national model for increasing access to four-year degrees and workforce training for students attending community colleges. Access would be enhanced by increasingly flexible educational opportunities – with courses, programs and support services delivered at a time and place, in a way and at a pace, best suited to the needs of the individual learner.

Part of Project Eagle is an evaluation of e-learning practices at the college, using a series of six critical questions formulated by the Project Eagle Action Committee (previously known as the Project Eagle Working Group) and shaped into a [plan](#) by the project’s external evaluator. The evaluation for the sixth question began with an examination of the best e-learning practices related to that question, both nationwide and worldwide, using the Web as the primary source of information. The results were published in [Best Educational E-Practices \(BEEP\), Issue 17, Becoming a National Model for E-Learning](#).

Then a list of all practices related to the question and currently in use at SPC was compiled and compared to those included in [BEEP #17](#). A [report](#) was prepared that benchmarked SPC with the best of what is occurring nationally and the results submitted to the college leadership. This is a summary of the findings and recommendations of that report.

Background

The sixth question to be evaluated posed the question of how to take the successes accomplished by the SPC eCampus and other programs supported by Project Eagle to the level of national models. Research results indicated that two factors were involved: program evaluation/improvement and informing the educational community.

From May to the middle of June 2002, SPC’s efforts in those areas were investigated. Methods included examining what has been done internally in terms of evaluation/improvement, as well as how information on eCampus and Eagle-supported activities has been disseminated nationally.

Results

A. Evaluating, Assessing, and Improving an E-Learning Program. Successful evaluation begins in the planning stages of a program. SPC has had the advantage of the [Project Eagle grant](#) document, which provides a very detailed outline for items and activities that require assessment.

Each of the goals set out in that document were isolated and set down in a list of [project deliverables](#), and individual staff members assigned to be responsible for their completion. An internal Project Eagle Action Committee (formerly the Project Eagle Working Group,) has successfully overseen program activities and reviewed the deliverables' reports on a monthly basis. In addition, a number of tools have been developed that have been useful in evaluating the ongoing activities of Eagle and the eCampus:

1. [Best Educational E-Practices \(BEEP\)](#). Monthly newsletter used for planning and assessment.
2. [Project Eagle Evaluation Plan](#). Series of question designed to evaluate the college's accomplishments in its e-learning endeavors.
3. [Project Eagle Research Capsules \(PERC\)](#). Occasional summaries of e-learning research, internal and external.
4. [Evaluative forms and procedures](#). A variety of new forms for the eCampus and other Eagle-funded projects that include several useful for evaluation.
5. [Plan for the New SPC Electronic Campus](#). Designed for the new eCampus, which was created shortly after receipt of the Eagle grant.
6. **Evaluations by individual faculty**. Formal and informal assessments have been done by instructors of students in their classes, (e.g., [statistics](#) and [communications](#)).

In the last year of Project Eagle, the subject of evaluation will be a central one. Internal evaluators have selected elements from [Basic Guide to Program Evaluation](#) (The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits), [Evaluation for Distance Educators](#) (University of Idaho College of Engineering), and [Planning a Program Evaluation](#) (University of Wisconsin Extension) as models for the process.

B. Informing the Educational Community. The efforts to disseminate information about the accomplishments made possible with Project Eagle support have been vigorous and ongoing. Not surprisingly, the Web has been the most effective medium for informing others of the work being done here. Examples include press releases with online exposure, the monthly newsletter [BEEP](#), Web sites for [eCampus](#), [Project Eagle](#) and the [SPC Cyber Advisor](#) and most recently a presentation at the [Teaching in the Community College Online Conference](#), May 2002.

Individual faculty and staff involved in e-learning at SPC have also made noteworthy contributions:

1. The online [Vet Tech program](#), under the leadership of Guy Hancock, was the first of its kind in the country and enjoys a national reputation.
2. A unique strategy for providing Web video presentations to deaf students has been developed by instructional technologists, and has already received national recognition.
3. Several eCampus faculty have been singled out for recognition at various levels.
4. The college videographer, Dave Herring, has won several national awards.

The physical presence of the SPC eCampus, instructional technology department, Administrative Information Systems, and the [University Partnership Center](#) at the college's high technology and high profile Seminole campus has drawn many like-minded individuals and groups there. They have taken what they've learned about SPC's innovations back home and informed others, thereby enhancing the college's e-learning reputation.

The attendance and [presentations of SPC e-learning personnel](#) at an impressive number of conferences and meetings nationwide has proven another very good way to inform the educational community.

The area of least success has been the traditional route of coverage in printed publications. However, since one of Project Eagle's external evaluators has advised that this route is probably the least appropriate for the program, efforts in using this mode have been fairly limited.

The efforts made in evaluating and improving Eagle-supported activities, as well as those of informing the educational community of SPC's accomplishments have been varied, thorough, and successful to date.