

# Executive Review of Primary Findings

North Idaho College commissioned Strategic Research Associates to conduct two telephone surveys (a general population survey and a survey of local business leaders) and two focus groups, one composed of internal constituents (students, staff, faculty and administrators) and another group composed of area business and community leaders. The research was conducted between December 2007 and January 2008.

This Executive report provides a brief synopsis of selected research findings. The full reports, however, will provide more thorough summaries and should be consulted for further detail on methodology, demographics, and research findings.

- **Familiarity with and top-of-mind perceptions about North Idaho College and other area colleges**

Among the 200 respondents in the general population survey, 39% said they were “very familiar” with the college; 45% “moderately” and 15% “not very”. These levels of awareness were almost identical for the Business Leader survey, which suggests that NIC’s visibility within the North Idaho community is very strong. When asked to provide a “top of mind” perception, respondents in both surveys cited the college’s attractive campus as the dominant attribute.

- **Perceptions about North Idaho College’s current performance**

For the general population survey 23% described NIC’s overall performance as outstanding; 60% as good. This sentiment was almost identical in the business survey.

For both surveys, respondents were asked to rate a series of attributes. Again, the attractiveness of the campus received the highest mean score followed by contributions to the community. The latter seems particularly important because it was a theme that surfaced in the internal focus group. These respondents (faculty, staff, and administrators) made it clear that improving relations with the community was an important facet of NIC’s long term planning.

While the two surveys suggest that the College is making progress in improving its relationship with the community, the academic component is missing. Both surveys pointed to the need for more emphasis on instructional and faculty quality.

When the academic issue was explored in the external focus group, respondents highlighted the nursing program and the workforce training center. They really praised these programs and felt that these were areas where the College could differentiate itself from other institutions.

- **Recommendations about North Idaho College’s priorities**

With minor variations between the business and general population surveys, the following attributes received the highest average priority rating:

A safe campus, high ethical standards, high instructional quality, current technology for student use, quality of faculty, and preparing students to enter a four year college.

In the business survey, three areas, high instructional quality, preparing students to enter the workforce with a trade, and quality of faculty received above–median (50th percentile) priority

# Executive Review of Primary Findings (cont.)

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scores but below-median scores for performance, suggesting that the performances in these areas may not be meeting the business community's expectations.

- **Perceptions about NIC Graduates**

Business representatives were asked to imagine a job candidate that is a recent graduate of North Idaho College and what impact this would have on his or her hiring. Forty-Eight (48%) stated their business would be more likely to hire the graduate, 8% stated their business would be less likely to hire the graduate, 43% stated it would have no effect on their businesses decision to hire the graduate, and 3% responded "don't know" or "refused".

Respondents were asked about the likelihood that they would recommend NIC to a prospective student. Three out of four respondents (75%) stated "very likely" and no one stated "not very likely" to recommend NIC to a prospective student.

- **Perceptions about North Idaho College's media image**

For the business survey, 85% recalled having read about the college in a newspaper and 45%, hearing about it or seeing it on broadcast news. (88% could recall media coverage of any type.) Among those recalling media coverage, about 80% characterized it as "favorable".

Among the general population sample, two in three (67%) recalled having received direct mail from the college; 42%, a personal contact; 28% at least one visit to the college's website; and 15%, an e-mail notification. (Overall, 78% reported at least one type of contact.) Reactions to these contacts tended to be positive: About six in seven rated their personal and website contacts as "favorable" and 73% did the same for direct mail. Regarding media coverage, 67% recalled having read about the college in a newspaper and 59%, having heard about it or seen it on broadcast news. (Seventy-eight percent [78%] could recall media coverage of any type.) Among those recalling media coverage, about eight in ten characterized it as "favorable." Older respondents – most likely to be traditional news consumers – were more likely than others to recall coverage and to describe it as "favorable."