Placement rates of students who have completed certificates and degrees are an important indicator of student success at Belmont Technical College. Placement rates are assessed by program area, as well as for the college overall. The assessment is carried out so that program chairs and faculty members can be aware of students' success as students in their programs transition from academic programs to finding meaningful employment. (*Policy Manual*, *Ends*, Section IV, 400.0100.00, Student Development, 2007).

The Office of Career Services surveys BTC graduates six months after students have completed certificate and degree programs. A survey instrument developed in coordination with Ohio AQIP institutions is sent to graduates. The survey asks about graduates' current employment status and their satisfaction with preparation for the workforce. The paper and pencil survey instrument is mailed to graduates. Return envelopes are included with the first request for information. Graduates' responses are recorded in a spreadsheet. Those graduates who do not respond to the mailed request are contacted by telephone and asked the questions from the survey instrument.

Data

The data provided in this report are based upon records from the Career Services office gathered over a period of four quarters. Included are records for 336 students who received degrees or certificates during college graduations in June 2008, August 2008, December 2008, and March 2009. During that period, there were a total of 370 degrees and certificates awarded to students. Chart 1, *Placement survey administration, June 2008 through March 2009*, breaks out by quarters the number of certificates and degrees completed and the number of graduates surveyed for the same quarters. Efforts were made to reach all graduates through the mail or by telephone.

Chart 1, *Placement survey administration, June 2008 through March 2009*

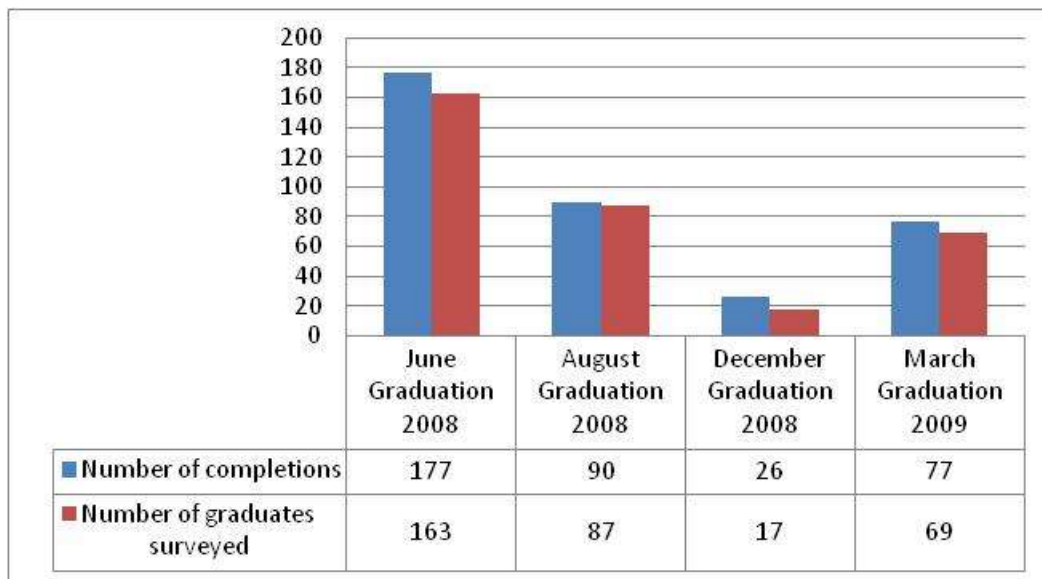|	June Graduation 2008	August Graduation 2008	December Graduation 2008	March Graduation 2009
■ Number of completions	177	90	26	77
■ Number of graduates surveyed	163	87	17	69

Table 1, *Placement data and rates by program, June 2008 through March 2009*, is organized on the vertical axis by programs. The first two columns report the number of students to whom the survey was administered and the number of graduates who responded to the survey. Both of these columns refer to "All Graduates." The table then displays the following information: the percent of graduates who reported that they were employed; the number of graduates who reported that they were employed, and the number of graduates who reported being employed in a field related to their BTC program of study. For example, the first row for the program, Accounting, shows that seven graduates received surveys, and of those seven, four graduates responded to either the paper and pencil instrument or a follow-up telephone call. The third column showing the percentage of graduates employed reveals that 75 percent of graduates who responded to the survey indicated that they were employed. In the case of Accounting, three of the four graduates who responded to the survey indicated they were employed. The last column shows that of the three Accounting program graduates who reported they were working, two of those are employed in the field of accounting.

Table 1, *Placement data and rates by program, June 2008 through March 2009*

Programs	All graduates (n=336)		Graduates who responded (n= 185)		
	Number of graduates surveyed	Number of graduates responding	Percent of graduates employed	Number employed	Number employed working in a related field
Accounting	7	4	75%	3	2
Assoc Degree nursing	85	40	95%	38	35
Business Admin & Leadership	9	5	60%	3	1
Business Management	7	4	100%	4	4
Child Development	13	8	75%	6	3
Civil Engineering/Civil Construction	7	6	67%	4	2
Criminal Justice	23	15	73%	11	8
Industrial Electronics	21	16	75%	12	10
Industrial Trades - HVAC/Machining/Welding	16	9	78%	7	5
Information Technologies	20	15	67%	10	7
Medical Assisting	17	11	100%	11	9
Medical Coding	13	5	60%	3	2
Medical Transcript	12	7	43%	3	2
Mental Health	16	8	88%	7	3
Office Administration	3	1	100%	1	1
Firefighter/Paramedic	1	0	NA	0	0
Practical Nursing	58	28	75%	21	20
Preservation Restoration	2	1	100%	1	1
Radiology	1	0	NA	0	0
Real Estate	2	1	100%	1	1
Small Business & Entrepreneurship	3	1	100%	1	0
Totals	336	185	79%	147	116

Analysis

Graduates of programs in Medical Assisting, Business Management, Office Administration, Real Estate, and Small Business & Entrepreneurship reported the highest rates of employment following graduation. The overall placement rate for this reporting period is 79 percent. The monitoring report for a similar reporting period last year indicated an 80 percent

placement rate. In both years, the data were dervied from voluntary responses to mailed and telephone surveys.

In program areas where there were fewer than five graduates for the four-quarter period of data collection, placement rate data are not generalizable. However, program chairs in those program areas are analyzing their data as a part of their program review process. Data from the placement report are used in all programs as a basis for decision-making and action planning.

Benchmarking for placement is not readily available; however, academic administration and program chairs at Belmont are striving to achieve a 70 percent placement rate for graduates. There are five programs included in this report showing placement for graduates at lower than 70 percent. Program chairs for Business Administration and Leadership, Civil Engineering/Civil Construction, Information Technologies, Medical Coding and Medical Transcription are examining placements rates within their programs and considering action plans to embed in Program Reviews which will be completed in March 2010.

Conclusions

Program chairs observe that graduates are finding the job market to be challenging in the current economic climate. Program chairs in Business and Civil Engineering speculate that graduates from their programs have been affected by the down-turn in the economy. Many jobs in Civil Engineering are tied to the housing market and to the West Virginia and Ohio Departments of Transportation. Future releases of stimulus money may improve the job market in those areas. The coal mining industry has slowed the hiring of employees, and as a result some Belmont graduates are planning to further their educations with a Bachelor's degree from the University of Akron. Program chairs in these areas recommend continuing to strengthen Belmont's network with area businesses to improve job placement rates. It is possible also that increasing students' participation in internships will have a positive effect on placement rates following graduation.

Adding to the economic issues that decrease opportunities for graduates, is the factor that some graduates do not want to leave the geographic area for employment. This is particularly the case in medical transcription where Belmont graduates are looking for ways to combine family responsibilities with careers by working from home. These grads are finding that medical transcription positions require more experience than they have when they finish the program. In the field of medical coding, employers want certified coders. The certification test is not offered at Belmont at this time. The cost of the certification exam is a factor for some graduates as well.

In the field of Information Technology, local job placement is improving slowly for Networking and Computer Science graduates. For positions in graphics, multimedia and web design, graduates need to be willing to travel outside the area for jobs.

Recommendations

1. The curriculum in Civil Engineering will be updated to include electives in the areas of waste water treatment, water conservation, and other energy-related topics.
2. The textbook used in the medical coding program will be changed so that more content covered on the certification exam is included in the curriculum. In addition, students will be encouraged to take the medical coding certification exam.
3. Consult with advisory boards about future jobs in information technology.
4. Continue involvement with AITP to connect with local computer companies. And continue to involve students in AITP meetings to enhance their professional developmental and leadership skills.