

## Report on Employer Surveys

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The General Education Task Force gathered data on what employers feel are the most important skills in employees and how prepared ASU students are with respect to these skills. The employer/alumni subcommittee decided to use data gathered from the Walker College of Business to gain insight into state employers and surveys from the National Association of Colleges and Employers for employers on the national level. It was decided that these databases would give excellent information and that a survey of our own design would yield similar results.

### State Data:

The Walker College of Business conducts surveys of recruiters during the spring and fall on-campus trips. These surveys asked recruiters to rate the importance of certain skills to their organization and then asked to rank the level possessed by ASU students for these same attributes. During the spring and fall semesters of 2003 and 2004, approximately 125 recruiters filled out the surveys for their organization and 75 filled out the surveys for the level by ASU students.

**Results:** Table 1 shows the importance to the organization. The most important skills for employers (> 95% important) are problem analysis skills, listening skills, oral communication skills, teamwork, persistence, leadership, decision-making skills, honesty and integrity, and reliability. The more discipline-based skills: statistical analysis, multi-medial presentation, technical report writing, global business awareness, applied computer skills, and information technology skills ranked much lower.

Table 2 shows the level at which ASU graduates are performing. While there are no areas where ASU students are particularly lacking (the highest “below average” was only 7%), ASU students do well (> 50% above average) in listening, oral communication, teamwork, persistence, leadership, honesty and integrity, and reliability. The two categories that stand out are multi-cultural appreciation, where 65% of employers say this is very important and 50% of ASU students are average or below, and decision-making, which 86% of employers rate as very important and 50% of ASU students are average or below.

**Table 1: How important are the following to your organization?** (Rows may not add up to 100% due to rounding).

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not Important
Problem Analysis Skills	68%	28%	5%	0%
Statistical Analysis Skills	18%	31%	39%	13%
Listening Skills	93%	7%	0%	0%
Oral Communication Skills	93%	6%	1%	0%

Written Communication Skills	50%	36%	12%	2%
Presentation Skills	55%	31%	9%	5%
Multi-Medial Presentation Skills	29%	29%	29%	13%
Technical Report Writing	16%	25%	33%	26%
Teamwork (ability to work with others)	90%	9%	1%	0%
Diversity, or Multi-Cultural Appreciation	65%	24%	7%	4%
Persistence to Accomplish Task	94%	6%	0%	0%
Leadership Skills	78%	18%	3%	1%
Decision-Making Skills	86%	13%	2%	0%
Planning Management	62%	27%	11%	1%
Global Business Awareness	11%	35%	35%	19%
Global Cultural Differences and Diversity	19%	42%	29%	11%
Honesty and Integrity	95%	4%	1%	0%
Reliability (taking responsibility)	96%	3%	1%	0%
Applied Computer Skills	24%	38%	32%	6%
Understanding of Information Technology in the Workplace	19%	40%	35%	6%

**Table 2: At what level are ASU College of Business graduates performing in the following areas?** (Rows may not add up to 100% due to rounding).

	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Not Applicable
Problem Analysis Skills	44%	48%	0%	8%
Statistical Analysis Skills	26%	54%	1%	18%
Listening Skills	53%	41%	1%	5%
Oral Communication Skills	59%	36%	0%	5%
Written Communication Skills	34%	52%	0%	14%
Presentation Skills	41%	47%	1%	11%
Multi-Medial Presentation Skills	17%	54%	3%	26%
Technical Report Writing	19%	48%	4%	29%
Teamwork (ability to work with others)	56%	35%	0%	10%

Diversity, or Multi-Cultural Appreciation	39%	47%	3%	11%
Persistence to Accomplish Task	50%	38%	3%	10%
Leadership Skills	53%	39%	1%	7%
Decision-Making Skills	44%	49%	1%	6%
Planning Management	39%	49%	6%	6%
Global Business Awareness	20%	56%	6%	18%
Global Cultural Differences and Diversity	21%	52%	7%	20%
Honesty and Integrity	61%	34%	0%	6%
Reliability (taking responsibility)	52%	40%	2%	6%
Applied Computer Skills	39%	47%	3%	11%
Understanding of Information Technology in the Workplace	37%	47%	1%	14%

**Direct comment about state employers:**

Businesses want students “who can solve more problems, who can work in teams; who can see the big picture; who can communicate effectively; who can use technology effectively; and who can bring a strong work ethic.”

“Staying a Step Ahead: Higher Education Transforming North Carolina’s Economy,” Pappas Consulting Group, July 2006, p. 4.

### National Data:

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) publication “Job Outlook 2006” shows the results of a survey of 250 employers (48.4% service sector, 40.8% manufacturers, and 10.8% government/nonprofit). By region, 33.2% were from the South, 27.2% were from the Midwest, 22.4% were from the Northeast, and 17.2% were from the West. The survey asked employers to rate the importance of 20 qualities/skills in candidates on a scale from 1-5 with 1 = not important and 5 = extremely important. These data are in-line with the College of Business data in that the top 5 qualities/skills in the NACE report are also very important to ASU employers. The results are indicated in the table 3 below:

**Table 3: Average level of importance of skills**

<b>quality/skill</b>	<b>average rating</b>
Communication skills (verbal and written)	4.7
Honesty/integrity	4.7
Teamwork skills (works well with others)	4.6
Strong work ethic	4.5
Analytical skills	4.4
Flexibility/adaptability	4.4
Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)	4.4
Motivation/Initiative	4.4
Computer skills	4.3
Detail-oriented	4.1
Organizational skills	4.1
Leadership skills	4.0
Self-confidence	4.0
Well-mannered/polite	3.9
Friendly/outgoing personality	3.8
Tactfulness	3.8
Creativity	3.6
GPA (3.0 or better)	3.5
Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker	3.2
Sense of humor	3.2

NACE also reports that communication skills are the very skills employers most often say candidates lack.

**Other National Survey** - In an article published on the NACE website, employers and department heads were each asked to rate the importance of 12 performance dimensions in college graduates. Each was ranked from 1-5 with 1 = Not important and 5 = Absolutely necessary. The average rankings appear in tables below:

### Employers

Dimension	Mean
Interpersonal skills	4.72
Ethics and integrity	4.63
Leadership	4.26
Perseverance	4.19
Knowledge	4.07
Adaptability and life skills	4.04
Continuous learning	3.84
Multicultural tolerance	3.78
Career orientation	3.54
Social responsibility	3.17
Health	2.73
Artistic appreciation	1.74

### College chairs

Dimension	Mean
Knowledge	4.17
Ethics and integrity	4.14
Social responsibility*	3.80
Interpersonal skills	3.74
Multicultural tolerance	3.73
Continuous learning	3.71
Leadership	3.36
Health	3.08
Perseverance	3.05
Career orientation	2.95
Adaptability and life skills	2.95
Artistic appreciation	2.95

\* Social Responsibility was third for college chairs but its mean value was lower than 4 (the actual value was accidentally omitted from the article). The estimate was obtained by the data that were given in the article.

Notice that employers rate 6 dimensions as very important (average higher than 4) but only 2 dimensions were very important for colleges.

“Do Employers and Colleges See Eye to Eye? College Student Development and Assessment”  
Smriti Shivpuri and Brian Kim, Fall 2004 Journal of NACE.

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**Other National Survey** - In 2000, small business owners were asked the importance of a given set of skills. Their results are given below:

Skill	Percentage who felt very important
Verbal Communication Skills	86%
Interpersonal Skills	77%
Math Skills	62%
Written Communication	59%
Basic Business Skills	52%
Financial Accounting	46%
Mechanical Ability	43%
Computer Skills	41%
Internet knowledge	18%
Science	18%

American Express, Small Business Services, *Voices from Main Street: Assessing the State of Small Business Workforce Skills (PDF file)*, American Express, New York, NY, 2000.