INTRODUCTION

• A GAP EXISTS BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS (JASCHICK, 2015)

• EMPLOYERS SEEK HIGHER-ORDER PERSONAL TRAITS AND BEHAVIORAL SKILLS (BENTLEY UNIVERSITY, 2014; PARANTO & KELKAR, 2000)
METHODOLOGY

- **ALUMNI WORKFORCE READINESS SURVEY (LANDRUM, HETTICH, & WILNER, 2010)**
  - Students selected and ranked their top 10 most important competencies from a list of 54.
  - They also identified ways that a college student might learn to strengthen each skill.

- **AGRICULTURAL JOB POSTINGS**
  - 50 entry-level positions in various agriculture-related fields.
  - Collected from aghires.com, agcareers.com, and the National FFA Organization.
  - Analyzed for themes regarding desired employee traits.

- **PARTICIPANTS**
  - Professional Presentations in AELC (AELC 3333).
  - Professional Writing in Agriculture and Natural Resources (AELC 3203).
  - $N = 59$.
# RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Top 10 Skills</th>
<th>Employers’ Top 10 Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Work well with others*</td>
<td>1. Presentation/verbal communication skills</td>
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<td>2. Adapt to change*</td>
<td>2. Teamwork, communication, and attitude*</td>
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<td>3. Work independently*</td>
<td>3. Written communication skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teach and learn from others on the job*</td>
<td>4. Time management, organization, and prioritization*</td>
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<td>5. Manage several tasks at once*</td>
<td>5. Flexibility and adaptability*</td>
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<td>6. Possess a positive attitude towards work*</td>
<td>6. Work without supervision/independently*</td>
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<td>7. Handle conflict maturely*</td>
<td>7. Meeting customer needs</td>
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<td>8. Demonstrate highly-developed social skills*</td>
<td>8. Problem and conflict management*</td>
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<td>9. Function effectively in stressful situations</td>
<td>9. Ability to learn on the job*</td>
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<td>10. Possess self-discipline, including punctual attendance</td>
<td>10. Demonstrate personal integrity and responsibility*</td>
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<td>and reliability*</td>
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* = a skill or attribute from the student list that was matched with one from the employer list.
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

1. WORK WELL WITH OTHERS*
   - Group projects
   - Clubs/social organizations
   - Intramural sports

2. ADAPT TO CHANGE*
   - Change in the classroom (due dates, new projects, different teaching styles etc.)
   - Working with new technology
   - Trying new things
   - Learning on the job
3. **WORK INDEPENDENTLY***
   - INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS/ASSIGNMENTS
   - HOMEWORK
   - TESTS/EXAMS

4. **TEACH AND LEARN FROM OTHERS ON THE JOB***
   - MENTOR OTHERS/RECEIVE MENTORING
   - TUTOR OTHERS/RECEIVE TUTORING
   - ALLOW STUDENTS TO TEACH
   - GROUP PROJECTS
   - WORK PART-TIME WHILE IN SCHOOL
5. MANAGE SEVERAL TASKS AT ONCE*
   • TAKE SEVERAL CLASSES IN ONE SEMESTER
   • MANAGE DUE DATES
   • WORK PART TIME WHILE IN SCHOOL

6. POSSESS A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORK*
   • CREATE A POSITIVE CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE
   • OFFER INCENTIVES FOR STUDENTS TO WORK HARD
   • GROUP PROJECTS
   • KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE IN LIFE
7. HANDLE CONFLICT MATURELY*
   • CONFLICT DURING GROUP PROJECTS
   • DEBATE AND DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES
   • PROBLEM-SOLVING ACTIVITIES
   • DISAGREEMENTS WITH PROFESSORS/CLASSMATES

8. DEMONSTRATE HIGHLY-DEVELOPED SOCIAL SKILLS*
   • STRUCTURED SOCIAL EVENTS/NETWORKING EVENTS
   • ACTIVITIES REQUIRING COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION
   • PUBLIC SPEAKING ACTIVITIES
   • SCHOOL PROMOTION POSITIONS (TOUR GUIDE, RA, ETC.)
9. FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS
• CLASS DEADLINES AND DUE DATES
• TIMED TESTS OR ASSIGNMENTS
• MANAGING DEMANDS OF SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE
• EXPOSURE TO NEW OR UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATIONS

10. POSSESS SELF-DISCIPLINE, INCLUDING PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE AND RELIABILITY*
• BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND CLASS
• REWARDS FOR PUNCTUALITY AND GOOD ATTENDANCE
• MANAGING DEMANDS OF SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE
CONCLUSIONS

• EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS MOSTLY AGREE ON WHAT TRAITS ARE NEEDED
  • Work ethic, independence, responsibility, adaptability, ability to learn

• VIEWS DIFFERED REGARDING COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS
  • Employers seek those who can speak publicly and write well
  • Students did not value meeting customer or client needs

• STUDENTS RECOGNIZE WAYS IN WHICH THEY CAN LEARN OR PRACTICE WORKFORCE READINESS SKILLS
RECOMMENDATIONS

• **INSTRUCTORS SHOULD ACTIVELY UTILIZE STUDENTS’ SUGGESTIONS FOR SKILL AND TRAIT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**
  • Challenge students to attend class and complete assignments
  • Utilize more activities that involve communication, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities

• **PLACE ASSIGNMENTS IN A WORK-SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND MAKE THEM AS TRUE TO LIFE AS POSSIBLE**
  • Indicate or explain what skills are being learned and why they are important on the job
  • Demonstrate how both oral and written communications skills are used
Recommendations

• BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS.
  • Connection to industry needs, news, and job leads
  • First hand information on job expectations

• ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO GET INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY AND CAMPUS LIFE AND NETWORK WITH OTHERS

• FURTHER RESEARCH TO IDENTIFY NEEDS SPECIFIC TO INDUSTRY AND LOCATION
References

BENTLEY UNIVERSITY (2014). THE PREPARED PROJECT AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT MILLENNIAL PREPAREDNESS FOR TODAY’S WORKFORCE. RETRIEVED FROM HTTPS://WWW.BENTLEY.EDU/FILES/PREPARED/1.29.2013_BENTLEYU_WHITEPAPER_SHAREABLE.PDF


LANDRUM, R. E., HETTICH, P. I., & WILNER, A. (2010). ALUMNI PERCEPTIONS OF WORKFORCE READINESS. TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY, 37, 97-106. DOI: 10.1080/00986281003626912
