



**Optimistic About the Future, But How Well Prepared?
College Students' Views on
College Learning and Career Success**

**Selected Findings from an Online
Survey of College Students
Conducted on Behalf of
the Association of American Colleges & Universities**

By Hart Research Associates

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Methodology

From November 13 to December 3, 2014, Hart Research conducted an online survey on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities among 613 college students—all of whom were ages 18 to 29 and within a year of obtaining a degree, or in the case of two-year college students, within a year of obtaining a degree or transferring to a four-year college. These students included 304 four-year public college seniors, 151 four-year private college seniors, and 158 community college students who plan to receive their associate degree or transfer to a four-year college within the next 12 months.

Prior to the survey, in September 2014, Hart Research conducted three focus groups among current college students. One group was convened in Waltham, Massachusetts, among seniors at private four-year colleges and universities. Two groups were held in Dallas, Texas—one group among seniors at public four-year colleges and universities and another group among students at community colleges who expect to receive their associate degree or transfer to a four-year college within the next 12 months.

The focus groups and survey were undertaken to explore college students' views on what really matters in college, including what learning outcomes are most important to them personally and for their future success. The research also explored current college students' sense of the job market today, their confidence in being able to secure a job, and how effectively they think that their college learning has prepared them for this. The research was designed to understand the learning outcomes students believe are most important to acquire to be able to succeed in today's economy and how well they feel that their college or university has prepared them in these areas. It also explored their participation in various applied and project-based learning experiences, as well as their perceptions of the degree to which employers value these experiences when hiring recent college graduates.

The survey of college students was conducted in tandem with a survey of 400 employers, and explored many of the same topics to provide a comparison between these two audiences.

This report highlights key findings from the research among college students. Selected comparisons with employers are included where relevant. A report of selected findings from the survey of employers was released by AAC&U in January 2015.

Overview

College students are focused on doing well in college and getting a good job after graduation. They are sanguine about their ability to get a job after graduation, and they generally are confident that their colleges have done a good job preparing them for success in the workplace.

College students are aligned with employers in recognizing that they need knowledge and skills beyond those of a specific field or major to achieve long-term career success. Indeed, a 63% majority of students believe that having both field-specific knowledge and a broad range of skills is important for recent college

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graduates to achieve long-term career success. This parallels the views of employers, a majority of whom recognize having both as being important.

The skills and knowledge that college students' recognize as most important for future career success include those that cut across majors, such as critical thinking skills, the ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings, written and oral communication skills, teamwork skills, and ethical decision-making. Importantly, employers also deem these learning outcomes as the most important. A key distinction between college students' and employers' priorities for college learning that will lead to workplace success is that students believe that awareness of and experience with diverse cultures both inside and outside the United States are more important than employers do.

College students believe that internships and other applied and project-based learning experiences can give recent graduates an edge when applying for a job, and employers indicate that is the case. Many students have engaged in these types of learning experiences (particularly four-year college students), or they plan on doing so before they receive their degree (community college students). Those students who have had an internship are among the most optimistic about their ability to get a job after graduation.

While college students generally agree with employers on the importance of key learning outcomes, they are notably out of sync with employers in their perceptions of their preparedness with these skills and knowledge outcomes. Students express much greater optimism about their level of preparedness in all areas than employers indicate they are seeing among applicants.

Key Findings

1. Doing well in their college studies and getting a good job rank as college students' top goals at this stage of their life.

- Among various goals that they may have today, more than four in five college students say that doing well in their college studies and getting a good job are very important to them personally (giving a rating of eight, nine, or 10 on a zero-to-10 scale). Approximately three in five indicate that maintaining friendships and making a difference by helping others also are very important goals for them, while half place a priority on making their community a better place to live and being informed about news, events, and developments happening within the United States. Slightly fewer (two in five) say that voting in elections and being informed about news and events outside the United States are very important. They are less focused on being involved politically, whether nationally or locally.

College Students' Ratings of the Importance of Select Goals and How Much They Think Their College Experience is Helping Them to Achieve Those Goals

	Very Important Goal Personally %	College Experience Helping A Lot/Fair Amount %
Doing well in my college studies	85	78
Getting a good job	82	74
Maintaining friendships and social connections	67	61
Making a difference by helping others	64	53
Being informed about news, events, and developments happening within the United States	53	43
Making my community a better place to live	52	49
Voting in elections, whether nationally, at the state level, or locally	44	35
Being informed about news, events, and developments happening outside the United States	41	42
Being involved politically, either nationally or locally	23	32

- Whether they are four-year public college seniors, four-year private college seniors, or community college students nearing degree completion or transfer, doing well in their studies and getting a good job top all college students' list of goals. In both cases, private four-year college students give their institutions slightly higher scores for helping in these areas, but large majorities of students across institution types do so as well. For instance, 85% of private four-year seniors, 78% of public four-year seniors, and 72% of community college students say their experiences in college are benefitting their college studies a lot or a fair amount. Far fewer students believe that their experiences in college are helping them to be politically involved.

2. The large majority of college students are optimistic about their ability to get a job after they graduate. They are divided, however, on how healthy the job market actually is for recent graduates.

- The majority of college students in this survey who are nearing graduation or are close to transferring to a four-year college think that the job prospects for recent college graduates in today's economy are good or excellent. However, just one in 10 describes them as excellent, and 46% think that they are just fair or poor.
- Overall, 73% of college students are very or fairly confident that they will be able to get a job after they graduate. Sixty-five percent (65%) are very or fairly confident that they can get a job that fits with their interests and goals.

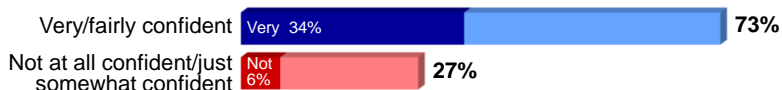
Nearly two in three students are confident that they will be able to get a job that fits with their interests.

(all students)

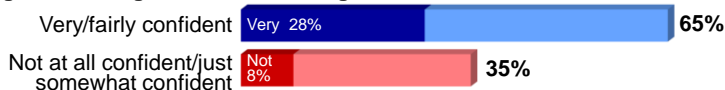
Job prospects for recent college graduates in today's economy:



Confidence that I will be able to get a job after I graduate from college:



Confidence that I will be able to get a job that fits with my interests and goals after I graduate from college:



- Confidence in their ability to get a job is high regardless of whether they are students at two-year or four-year colleges, though there is greater intensity to four-year private college students' confidence.

Students Express Confidence in Their Ability to Achieve Success in Securing a Job After Graduation

	<u>All College Students</u> %	<u>Four-Year Private College Students</u> %	<u>Four-Year Public College Students</u> %	<u>Two-Year College Students</u> %
Job prospects for recent college graduates are excellent/good	54	52	51	60
Very/fairly confident I will be able to get a job after graduate from college	73 (34% very)	75 (44% very)	72 (32% very)	72 (27% very)
Very/fairly confident I will be able to get a job that fits with interests and goals after graduate from college	65 (28% very)	68 (36% very)	62 (24% very)	69 (30% very)

- One factor that several college students in the focus groups say has made them feel prepared to enter the workforce is their experience applying what they have learned in college to real-world settings. In particular, college students note the positive impact of internships and work-study in helping prepare them to transition from college to the workforce.

"I definitely think my school prepared me for my field. There was a lot of academic advising. Our classes were really focused on having real-life skills. And then after having my internship, I definitely feel like I'm capable of doing this."

–Four-year private college student

"I feel like I'm very prepared. I think after my internship as well, that it went really well, and I can take on whatever it is I need to...I think it kind of gave me an idea of the real-world experiences, things you're going to have to deal with, issues that will come up in your real job, and how to handle them, and how to work with the people you need to work with. And it went really well...it worked really well for me."

–Four-year private college student

"I have this internship, and it's in medical sales, and so a lot of the stuff that I'm doing is kind of translating into this one class that I have. It's called professional selling, and it is...transparent. Like he teaches you stuff that I would literally do during the day like when I go call on an office or something. And so I can kind of see how school is translating into what I'm going to do, and I'm like, okay, I actually am going to need this. I'm more motivated to do good in that class and take those skills and really learn to make sure I'm reflecting that in the workforce."

–Four-year public college student

"I gave myself a 10 [on career readiness], because my degree required two full classes on separate semesters of doing work-study as well as we had additional hours of volunteer work that was not required, but it could bump you up a letter grade if you were wavering. And I also did two internships while doing that, not including my work-study. So I feel that the practical, on-the-job experience, not only at the job I do, but with the internships as well as my work at school, has kind of helped prepare me for what's next."

–Community college student

3. College students recognize that they need broad knowledge and skills beyond those of a specific field or major for long-term career success, and they believe that broad learning should be expected for all students.

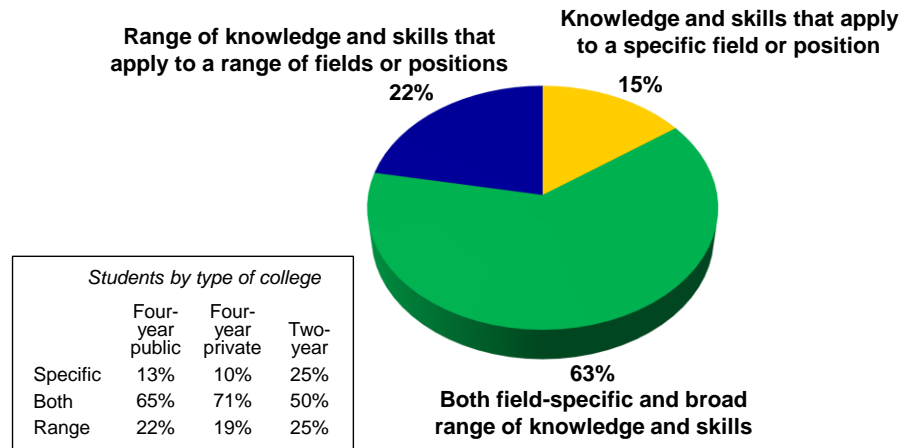
- College students indicate that they chose their majors not only to gain skills and knowledge needed to pursue a specific career path (56%), but also to gain skills and knowledge that will be applicable to multiple career paths (46%). They are most likely to say they selected their major to explore an area in which they are interested (69%). This pattern holds true across the three groups of students—they are all most likely to have selected a major because it is an area of interest.
- When asked about the importance of having field-specific knowledge and skills, having a range of skills and knowledge that cut across fields, or having both, fully 63% of college students believe that having both is most important for achieving long-term career success. Just 15% think that it is more important to have knowledge and skills that apply to a

specific field or position, and 22% think it is more important to have a range of skills and knowledge across a variety of fields.

More than three in five students believe that it takes BOTH specific knowledge/skills and broad knowledge/skills to achieve long-term career success.

Which is more important for recent college graduates to have who want to pursue advancement and long-term career success when they enter the workforce?

(all students)



- ***On this measure, college students are largely aligned with employers—the majority of whom (60%) feel that both field-specific and cross-cutting skills and knowledge are important for long-term career success.***
- When discussing in the focus groups the importance of field-specific skills vs. cross-cutting skills, many students cite the value of cross-cutting skills.

“I don't think that just because I can tell you a lot about macroeconomics [it] is going to make someone hire me. But maybe if I show them my critical thinking skills, these presentation skills, maybe that's why they're going to hire me.”

–Four-year private college student

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"I think that it's a better thing to have a broad range of the skills and different knowledge so that...in a changing company or a changing, evolving world, you can adapt and change very quickly to new skill sets, and you have all these things that you can offer to employers."

–Four-year private college student

"I say B [broad range of cross-cutting skills] because I've been on that side where I'm looking at resumes and looking to hire someone. And in the financial industry...you need to have a wide range of skills, be able to be moldable. Like, we need you to be able to do this now. Now we need you to be able to do this...I was working on a contract in June where we were building databases, and now we're doing accounting work. So it's like people that work in our group, they have to be able to do so many different things."

–Community college student

"I think a lot of companies, unless there's something very, very specific, like medical or something like that, a lot of companies will train you. Of course, they want someone who has an education to some extent, but a business degree or a marketing degree that can encompass so many different responsibilities or job positions...I think being versatile around skills is much more valuable to a company because you can do multiple things when they ask."

–Community college student

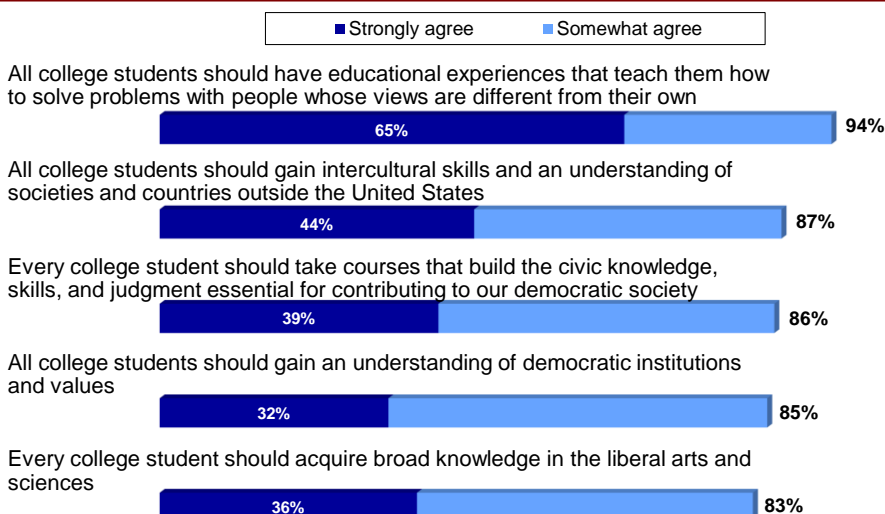
- ***The survey suggests that college students may not realize the extent to which employers prioritize cross-cutting skills.*** When asked what proportion of employers agree that to achieve success at his/her company, a candidate's demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than his or her undergraduate major, 44% of college students say they think that most employers agree with this statement (this includes 47% of four-year private college students, 46% of four-year public college students, and 36% of two-year college students). When employers are asked this question, fully 91% say they agree with it.

4. Students are nearly unanimous in their agreement that *all* college students should have educational experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own, and nearly as many agree that they should gain intercultural skills and an understanding of societies and countries outside the United States.

- Fully 94% of college students agree (including 65% who strongly agree) that all students should have experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people who have different views from their own, and nearly as many agree that they should all gain intercultural skills (87% agree, including 44% who strongly agree).
- College students also express support for learning outcomes focused on civic learning and an understanding of democratic institutions and values. Fully 86% agree that every college student should take courses that build civic knowledge, skills, and judgment essential for contributing to our

democratic society. Eighty-five percent (85%) of students agree that all college students should gain an understanding of democratic institutions and values. These views hold regardless of the type of higher education institution a student attends.

There is broad support for all college students having educational experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own



5. College students largely are aligned with employers in ranking the importance of selected learning outcomes to achieve success in the workplace. They recognize that it is most important for recent graduates to be proficient in skills and knowledge that cut across majors, including critical thinking skills, the ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings, written and oral communication skills, teamwork skills, and ethical decision-making.

Students were asked to rate the importance of proficiency in 17 selected skill and knowledge areas for recent college graduates to be successful in the workplace.

- College learning outcomes large majorities of students deem very important: College students recognize some skills and knowledge areas as more important for workplace success than others, including the cross-cutting skills related to critical thinking, applying knowledge in real-world settings, communication, teamwork, and ethical decision-making. Just as employers rank these learning outcomes as most important for workplace success, so do college students, with 74% or more rating each one as very important (a rating of eight, nine, or 10 on a zero-to-10 scale).

Significant percentages of students rank several other learning outcomes as very important, including the ability to problem-solve, locate and evaluate information from multiple sources, analyze and solve complex

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problems with people from different backgrounds and cultures, innovate, and stay current on changing technologies.

- College learning outcomes that fewer students rank as important: There is a slight drop in the proportion of college students who rate the following outcomes as very important: awareness and experience with cultures within the United States, the ability to work with numbers and understand statistics, staying current on global developments, staying current on developments in science, and awareness of and experience with cultures outside the United States. The outcome that the fewest students rate as important to workplace success is proficiency in a foreign language.

Students Rate the Importance of College Learning Outcomes

(Proportion of students and employers who rate each outcome as an 8, 9, or 10 on a 0-to-10 scale)

	<u>College Students</u> %	<u>Employers</u> %
Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills	79	81
The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings	79	80
The ability to effectively communicate orally	78	85
The ability to work effectively with others in teams	77	83
The ability to effectively communicate in writing	75	82
Ethical judgment and decision-making	74	81
The ability to analyze and solve complex problems	73	70
The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources	73	68
The ability to analyze and solve problems with people from different backgrounds and cultures	71	56
The ability to innovate and be creative	69	65
Staying current on changing technologies and their applications to the workplace	68	60
Awareness of and experience with diverse cultures and communities within the United States	58	37
The ability to work with numbers and understand statistics	55	56
Staying current on global developments and trends	49	25
Staying current on developments in science	49	26
Awareness of and experience with cultures and societies outside of the United States	46	23
Proficiency in a language other than English	35	23

Across all but one of the learning outcomes, students at two-year colleges are slightly less likely than four-year college students to rate each one as important, but the relative ranking of the outcomes largely is consistent across the three groups of students.

- ***When it comes to the learning outcomes that fewer students and employers rate as important, more students than employers rank each of these areas as more important. The gap is most notable when it comes to the perceived importance of having***

an awareness of and experience with diverse cultures both inside and outside the United States, staying current on global developments, and staying current on scientific developments; students are exceedingly more likely than employers to say that each is important to workplace success.

6. College students indicate that their institutions have communicated with them about learning outcomes in several ways.

- College students are most likely to say their college has communicated with them about required general education courses (89%), the skills and knowledge every student in their major will be expected to develop (82%), and the educational aims of required general education courses (81%). Additionally, 77% say their college has communicated with them about the skills and knowledge that their college aims for every graduate to develop in order to receive their degree, no matter their major, and 76% say their college has communicated about opportunities to apply skills and knowledge in real-world settings.

Students at community colleges are less likely to say their institutions have communicated with them about each of these things than are those at four-year institutions.

Proportion of Students Who Say Their College Has Communicated with Them about Selected College Learning Outcomes

	<u>%</u>
Required general education courses that may be outside your major, also sometimes called core or distribution requirements	
All	89
Students at 4-year private colleges	91
Students at 4-year public colleges	90
Students at 2-year colleges	84
The specific skills and knowledge areas every student in your major will be expected to develop or achieve	
All	82
Students at 4-year private colleges	89
Students at 4-year public colleges	84
Students at 2-year colleges	72
The educational aims and outcomes of the required general education courses outside your major, also sometimes called core or distribution requirements	
All	81
Students at 4-year private colleges	82
Students at 4-year public colleges	82
Students at 2-year colleges	76
The specific skills and areas of knowledge that your college aims for every graduate to develop or achieve in order to be awarded their college degree, regardless of their major	
All	77
Students at 4-year private colleges	83
Students at 4-year public colleges	75
Students at 2-year colleges	75
Opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge you have gained in real-world settings	
All	76
Students at 4-year private colleges	86
Students at 4-year public colleges	74
Students at 2-year colleges	69
The skills and knowledge that employers are looking for when they are hiring recent college graduates	
All	69
Students at 4-year private colleges	70
Students at 4-year public colleges	72
Students at 2-year colleges	63
How to effectively communicate to potential employers the key skills and knowledge you have gained in college	
All	68
Students at 4-year private colleges	74
Students at 4-year public colleges	70
Students at 2-year colleges	58

- While more than two in three students say their college has communicated about the skills and knowledge employers are looking for (69%), as well as how to effectively communicate to potential employers that they have gained key skills and knowledge (68%), our student focus groups indicate that these are two areas in which there is room for colleges, particularly two-year colleges, to expand their outreach.

"...My experience was pretty much like everybody else's. I mean, nobody really helped with anything. It was the same thing. Like they put us in a room, and you had to pick your own classes...The actual advisors were pretty much useless."

-Community college student

"I feel like advisors don't really take the time that they need to really ask what you really want or give you, like, let's say a type of homework to figure what you really want to do in life, and come back and talk to us again if the first time you go and talk to them you don't know. So that's what happened to me."

-Community college student

- A look at responses by students' majors reveals that those in pre-professional majors (81%) are more likely than those majoring in social sciences and humanities (62%) or STEM (65%) to say their college has communicated with them about the skills and knowledge that employers are seeking.

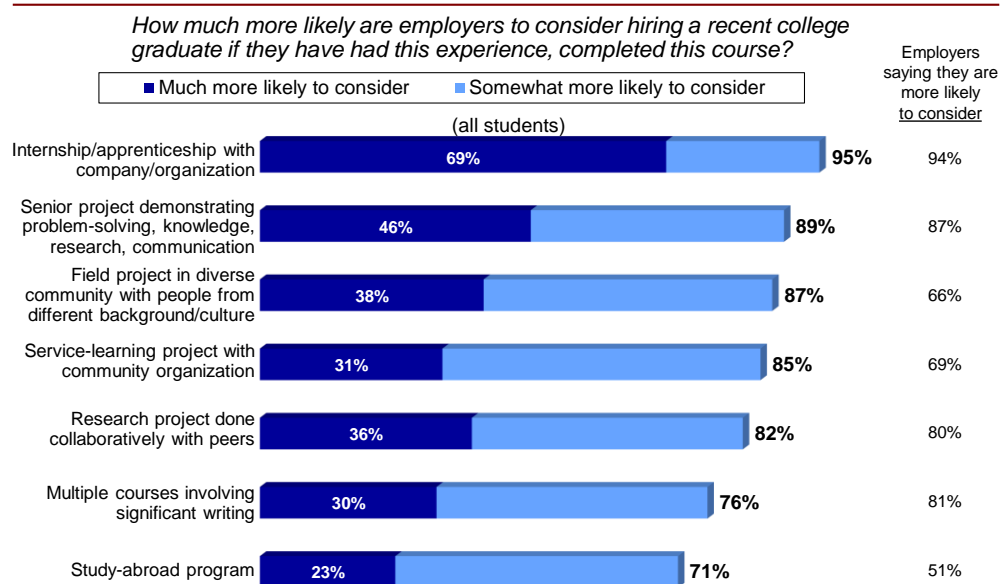
7. College students broadly recognize that employers value applied learning experiences, and most students expect to engage in one or more types of applied learning experiences before obtaining their degree.

- **College students believe that internships and other applied learning experiences can give recent graduates an edge when applying for a job**, as they think employers would be more likely to consider candidates who have engaged in these types of learning experiences.

They estimate that completion of an internship or apprenticeship would have the greatest impact on a recent college graduate's job candidacy, with 69% of students who think that employers would be much more likely to consider someone who had completed an internship.

Large majorities of college students across institutions think that completion of one or more of six other types of applied learning experiences would cause an employer to be more likely to consider a candidate, though there is less intensity to students' responses, as fewer think that each of these experiences would cause employers to be much more likely to consider an individual.

Students recognize that employers are more likely to consider hiring recent college graduates who have completed an applied learning or project-based learning experience.



- Students at four-year private colleges (84% much more likely to consider) are the most likely to anticipate that completion of an internship would have this effect, with four-year public college students close behind (70% much more likely to consider). Notably fewer two-year college students think that completion of an internship can have a significant impact on an individual's job candidacy (53% much more likely to consider). Of the various applied and engaged learning experiences included in the corresponding table, this is the only one for which there are significant differences in perceptions by institution type.

Students Who Feel Employers are Likely to Consider Hiring a College Graduate if They Have Completed an Internship or Apprenticeship With a Company or Organization

	<i>Much More Likely To Consider That Individual As A Job Candidate</i>	<i>Total More Likely To Consider That Individual As A Job Candidate</i>
	%	%
Students at 4-year private colleges	84	98
Students at 4-year public colleges	70	96
Students at 2-year colleges	53	92

- **Employers value graduates' completion of these applied and project-based learning experiences broadly**, with large majorities saying their company would be more likely to consider hiring a recent college graduate if the individual had engaged in these types of experiences. They, too, place the greatest emphasis on completion of an internship. Two learning experiences that current students are more likely to think that employers will value than employers say they do include completion of a field project in a diverse community with people from different backgrounds and completion of a study-abroad program.
- College students in the focus groups recognize the value particularly of internships in providing experience in applying college learning, no matter the field.

"Experience is a real, real big deal. They can look at it and be like, oh, you took this class with this professor? Oh, that's great, but you did just three months of working hands on and doing that. I would way rather have three months of you doing something that you were actually going to be doing than like a whole year of learning from somebody you didn't."

–Four-year public college student

"I see when they see you have an internship, you have worked with people, and you have those people skills...that's what shows instead of, oh, cool, you have a 4.0, but you've got no extracurricular. You know, great, you have great grades, but you haven't worked on a project with a peer or with a professor and worked on communication skills and those type of things."

–Four-year public college student

- **Students' participation in these various types of applied and project-based learning experiences varies notably by the type of institution they attend.** As illustrated in the corresponding table, students at four-year private colleges are most likely to say they have participated or are currently participating in each of the six types of engaged learning experiences, with those at four-year public institutions somewhat less likely to have done so. Students at two-year colleges are the least likely to have participated in these types of engaged learning experiences, but many say they plan to do so before getting their degree. For instance, 61% of four-year private college students and 42% of four-year public college students say they have done or are currently engaged in an internship or apprenticeship. Just 21% of two-year colleges have done so, but 63% plan to do so before getting their degree.

When the proportion that has done or are doing these activities is combined with those who say they plan to do them, the differences across the three student groups are minimal. Thus, if those who say they intend to engage in these learning experiences follow through, then the differences in participation will be small. Until those aspirations play out, however, the differences by institution type are notable.

Students at Private Colleges are Slightly More Likely to Participate in Applied and Project-Based Learning Experiences

	4-year Private College Students		4-year Public College Students		2-year College Students	
	Done/Doing %	Plan to Do %	Done/Doing %	Plan to Do %	Done/Doing %	Plan to Do %
Research project done collaboratively with peers	72	13	65	18	39	40
Internship/apprenticeship done with company/organization	61	20	42	34	21	63
Senior/thesis project demonstrating depth of knowledge and acquisition of research, problem-solving, communication skills	56	30	42	36	27	49
Community-based or service-learning project with a community organization	56	16	41	22	23	49
Field-based project in a diverse community setting with people from different backgrounds/cultures	39	19	27	23	19	45
Study-abroad program	21	10	15	16	15	37

- Students who have participated or currently are engaged in an internship are more optimistic about the potential to get a job than are those who have not and do not plan to do so.**

Students Rate the Importance of Selected Skills and Knowledge for Workplace Success

	All College Students %	Done/Currently Doing Internship %	Plan To Do Internship %	Not Done/Do Not Plan To Do Internship %
Job prospects for recent college graduates are excellent/good	54	60	53	41
Very/fairly confident will be able to get a job after graduate from college	73 (34% very)	79 (45% very)	72 (26% very)	61 (26% very)
Very/fairly confident will be able to get a job that fits with interests and goals after graduate from college	65 (28% very)	73 (36% very)	64 (22% very)	51 (25% very)

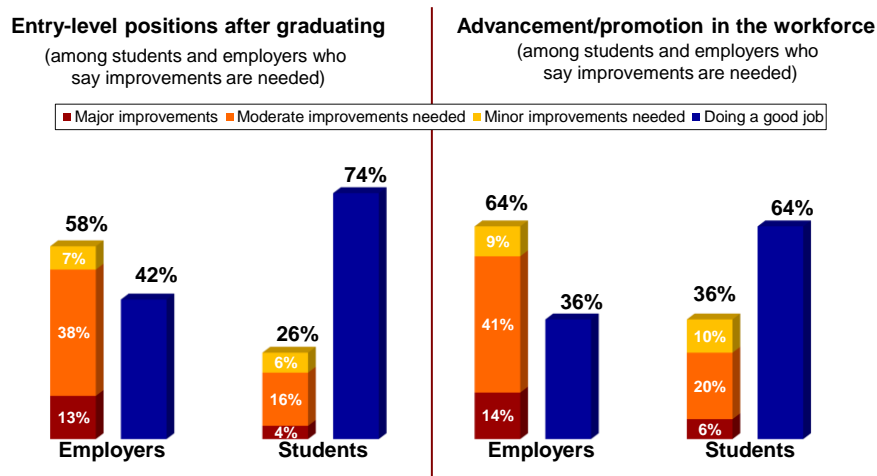
8. Many college students feel well prepared with specific skills and knowledge needed for workplace success, revealing a gap between their assessment and employers' appraisal of their preparedness.

- A large majority of college students think that their colleges are doing a good job in ensuring that graduates have the full set of skills and knowledge needed for success at both the entry level (74% good job, 26% improvements needed) and for advancement (64% good job, 36% improvement needed). Students at four-year private institutions are the

most complimentary of the job their college is doing, but large majorities of students at each type of institution feel this way. (For example, 80% at private four-year colleges, 71% at public four year colleges, and 73% at two-year colleges think their institution is doing a good job in preparing graduates for entry-level positions.)

Students are more likely than employers to think colleges are doing a good job in ensuring graduates gain the skills and knowledge needed for success.

How well is your college/university doing in ensuring that graduates possess the full set of skills and knowledge that they will need for success in this?



➤ ***There is a clear gap between students' impressions and employers' assessments of the job colleges are doing, however.*** Fully 58% of employers think that improvements are needed to ensure that graduates gain the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in entry-level positions at their company, while 42% think colleges and universities are doing a good job. An even larger proportion (64%) think that improvements are needed to ensure that graduates have the skills and knowledge needed to advance within their company.

- Overall, 62% of college students think their college or university needs to improve in ensuring that graduates gain a range of knowledge and skills that apply to a variety of fields, while 52% think they need to improve in ensuring graduates gain knowledge and skills in a specific field. This includes 31% who think both areas are in need of improvement, 31% who think more improvement is needed in ensuring cross-cutting skills/knowledge, and 21% who think more improvement is needed in ensuring field-specific skills/knowledge. Seventeen percent (17%) of students do not think their college needs to improve in either area.

➤ ***There is a bigger gap in employers' perceptions of colleges' need to improve in these areas.*** While some employers see room for colleges and universities to improve in terms of ensuring that graduates achieve both field-specific and cross-cutting knowledge and skills, they are nearly twice as likely to feel that there is need for

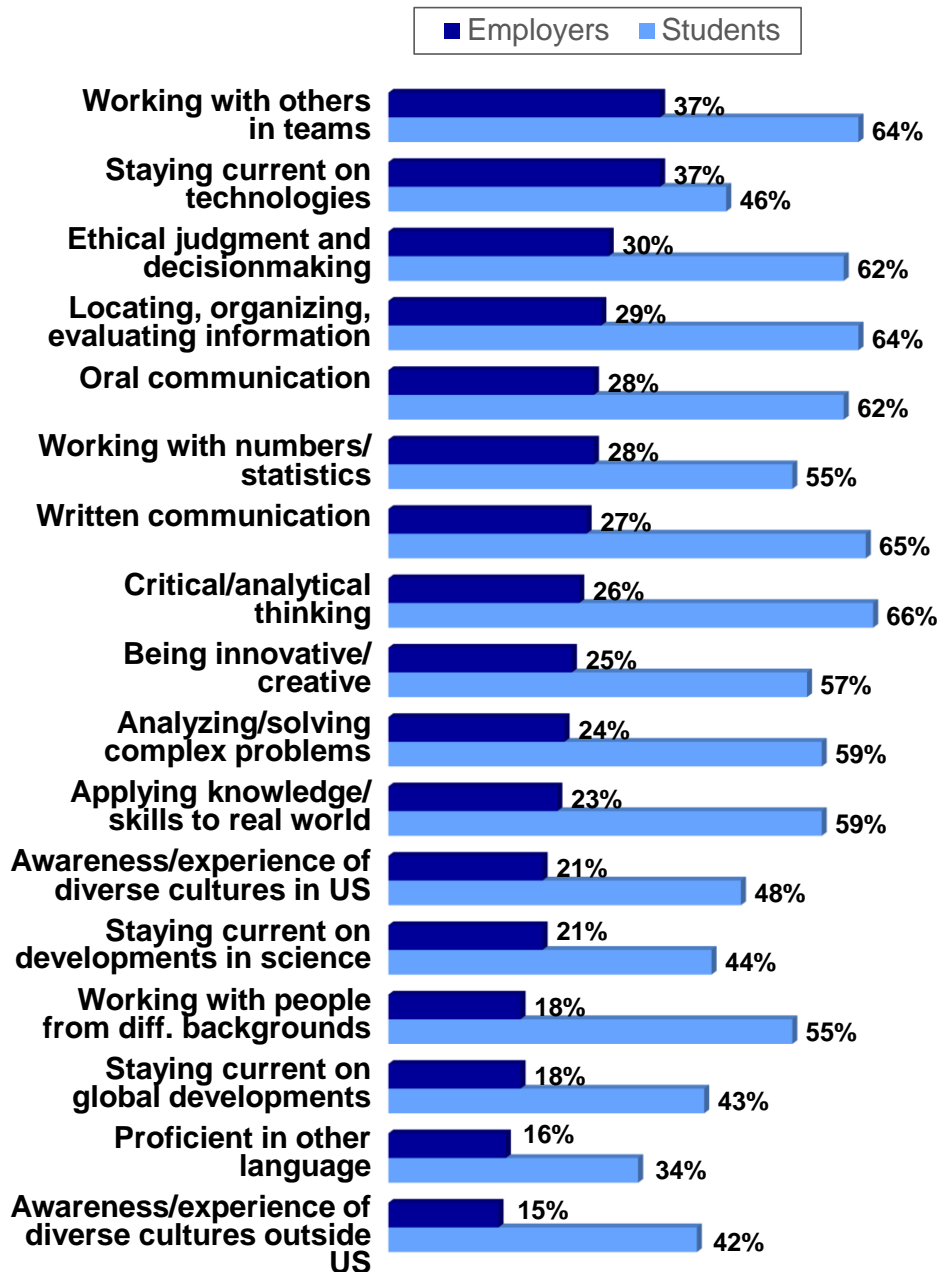
improvement in helping graduates gain cross-cutting skills and knowledge (81%) than in ensuring they gain field-specific skills and knowledge (48%). (Overall, 14% of employers think colleges and universities need to improve more in ensuring field-specific learning outcomes, 47% think they need to improve more in ensuring cross-cutting learning outcomes, and 34% of employers think equal amounts of improvement are needed in both; just 5% think neither area needs improvement.)

9. Majorities of college students feel well prepared on 11 of the 17 learning outcomes tested in the survey, and they are notably more optimistic about their preparedness than employers are about recent graduates' readiness in these areas. In many areas, four-year college seniors feel better prepared than do students at two-year colleges.

- Across 11 of the 17 learning outcomes tested in the survey, a majority of students feel that they are well prepared (giving a rating of eight, nine, or 10 on a scale from zero to 10). They rate their preparedness highest for the cross-cutting skills that they (and employers) rank as most important for workplace success.
- ***There is a notable gap between college students' feelings about their level of preparedness across key learning outcomes and employers' assessment of recent college graduates.*** Employers' ratings of recent college graduates' preparedness across the same 17 learning outcomes reveal room for improvement across the board. Even in the areas in which employers rate recent graduates as most prepared, fewer than two in five rate them as well prepared.

Students feel more prepared across learning outcomes than employers think recent graduates are.

Proportions saying they/recent college graduates are well prepared in each area*



*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale

- There are some variations in students' self-assessment of their preparedness by type of institution, with students at two-year colleges giving slightly lower ratings than four-year college students for their preparedness across most of the learning outcomes.
- The areas in which four-year private college students' evaluation of their preparedness is notably more optimistic than that of four-year public college students include the following areas: critical thinking; the ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources; oral communication; complex problem solving; and the ability to solve problems with people from different backgrounds and cultures. In other areas, the differences between private and public four-year college students are less pronounced.

Students Assess Their Level of Preparedness Across College Learning Outcomes
(Proportion of students who say they feel well prepared in each area, giving a rating of 8, 9, or 10 on a 0-to-10 scale)

	<u>%</u>
Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills	
All	66
Students at 4-year private colleges	78
Students at 4-year public colleges	66
Students at 2-year colleges	56
The ability to effectively communicate in writing	
All	65
Students at 4-year private colleges	73
Students at 4-year public colleges	66
Students at 2-year colleges	58
The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources	
All	64
Students at 4-year private colleges	77
Students at 4-year public colleges	65
Students at 2-year colleges	52
The ability to work effectively with others in teams	
All	64
Students at 4-year private colleges	70
Students at 4-year public colleges	65
Students at 2-year colleges	55
The ability to effectively communicate orally	
All	62
Students at 4-year private colleges	70
Students at 4-year public colleges	61
Students at 2-year colleges	56
Ethical judgment and decision-making	
All	62
Students at 4-year private colleges	69
Students at 4-year public colleges	66
Students at 2-year colleges	50
The ability to analyze and solve complex problems	
All	59
Students at 4-year private colleges	67
Students at 4-year public colleges	59
Students at 2-year colleges	53
The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings	
All	59
Students at 4-year private colleges	66
Students at 4-year public colleges	59
Students at 2-year colleges	51

Students Assess Their Level of Preparedness Across College Learning Outcomes
(Proportion of students who say they feel well prepared in each area, giving a rating of 8, 9, or 10 on a 0-to-10 scale) (cont'd)

	<u>%</u>
The ability to innovate and be creative	
All	57
Students at 4-year private colleges	62
Students at 4-year public colleges	57
Students at 2-year colleges	53
The ability to analyze and solve problems with people from different backgrounds and cultures	
All	55
Students at 4-year private colleges	63
Students at 4-year public colleges	55
Students at 2-year colleges	48
The ability to work with numbers and statistics	
All	55
Students at 4-year private colleges	53
Students at 4-year public colleges	57
Students at 2-year colleges	56
Awareness of and experience with diverse cultures and communities within the United States	
All	48
Students at 4-year private colleges	55
Students at 4-year public colleges	48
Students at 2-year colleges	39
Staying current on changing technologies and their applications to the workplace	
All	46
Students at 4-year private colleges	46
Students at 4-year public colleges	51
Students at 2-year colleges	40
Staying current on developments in science	
All	44
Students at 4-year private colleges	43
Students at 4-year public colleges	46
Students at 2-year colleges	41
Staying current on global developments and trends	
All	43
Students at 4-year private colleges	44
Students at 4-year public colleges	44
Students at 2-year colleges	38
Awareness of and experience with cultures and societies outside of the United States	
All	42
Students at 4-year private colleges	45
Students at 4-year public colleges	43
Students at 2-year colleges	36
Proficiency in a language other than English	
All	34
Students at 4-year private colleges	37
Students at 4-year public colleges	34
Students at 2-year colleges	31