

**SURVEY OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND EMPLOYERS
ON COLLEGE MAJORS AND SKILLS NEEDED FOR TODAY'S WORKPLACE**

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ABSTRACT

During the summer of 2002, research was conducted using the membership list of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), who answered questions about jobs available to college graduates, majors desired by employers, skills needed, and problems seen with new hires. A total of 1095 email surveys were sent and a response rate of 17% of the net deliverable surveys was achieved.

The objective of the research was to confirm interest in specific college majors and skills required for today's workers, elicit problems experienced by employers, and to extend earlier research questioning when employers want the graduate to pursue an MBA. The tie-in of the research to marketing is that students must market themselves. Are universities preparing them to do that?

Results on jobs offered and majors desired showed the greatest job opportunities in computer science, accounting, business administration, and computer information systems. Majors desired were highest for computer science (100%), finance (91%), accounting (90%), business administration (88%) and engineering (86%). They were lowest for behavioral science and liberal arts. However, there was good representation in all business fields and in engineering for this employer group, which consisted of companies mostly in fields of technology, financial, consumer staple goods, industrials and government, as represented in the Standard & Poors 500 sector.

The most important traits for new hires were attention to detail, enthusiasm, desire to succeed, and leadership skills. All companies required the ability to work in teams.

The respondents were asked about areas where students were less prepared than necessary for their jobs. Comments noted most included acclimation to work culture, time management, and communication skills, both oral and written. Employers also mentioned a lack of work experience or internships. There were some comments that the students learned too much theory and were not able to apply it in a working situation.

NACE members were also queried about when someone should get an MBA. The majority, 66%, felt that people should wait at least 1-3 years before going on to graduate school because they felt it important to understand the true requirements of business.

Results showed that, though computer science jobs were offered in 100% of the companies, other majors had good representation. The need for internships spoke clearly from the research. Problems continue to include unrealistic expectations of job progression and communication skills. This research signals a need to review curriculum in the business school for proper preparation in teamwork, presentations, and the use of problem solving skills. A world requiring flexibility and ownerships of one's career should be properly communicated at the college level.

Most companies think that people should wait more than one year to pursue an MBA.