



*Employer and Alumni Survey on
Job Skills: Who Gets Hired and Who is Prepared to
Perform?*

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INTRODUCTION

In spring 2014, faculty adopted 5 learning goals for all School of Business students to master: 1) written communication; 2) critical thinking; 3) ethical decision-making; 4) information literacy and 5) quantitative literacy. These goals were selected based on faculty experience with School of Business students, the most popular learning goals for AACSB schools, and publically available national surveys of employer needs. This document reports the results of a survey of employers in the greater New York area.

To further augment the findings from the employer survey, an independent survey of alumni was conducted that asked them to rate the importance of 13 skills* to their effectiveness on their job. They were also asked to rate the degree to which their education in the School of Business prepared them in each of the 13 skills. The survey was emailed to School of Business alumni that graduated in the period 2010 – 2014. Only graduated from 2013 and 2014 were used for this analysis.

MAJOR FINDINGS

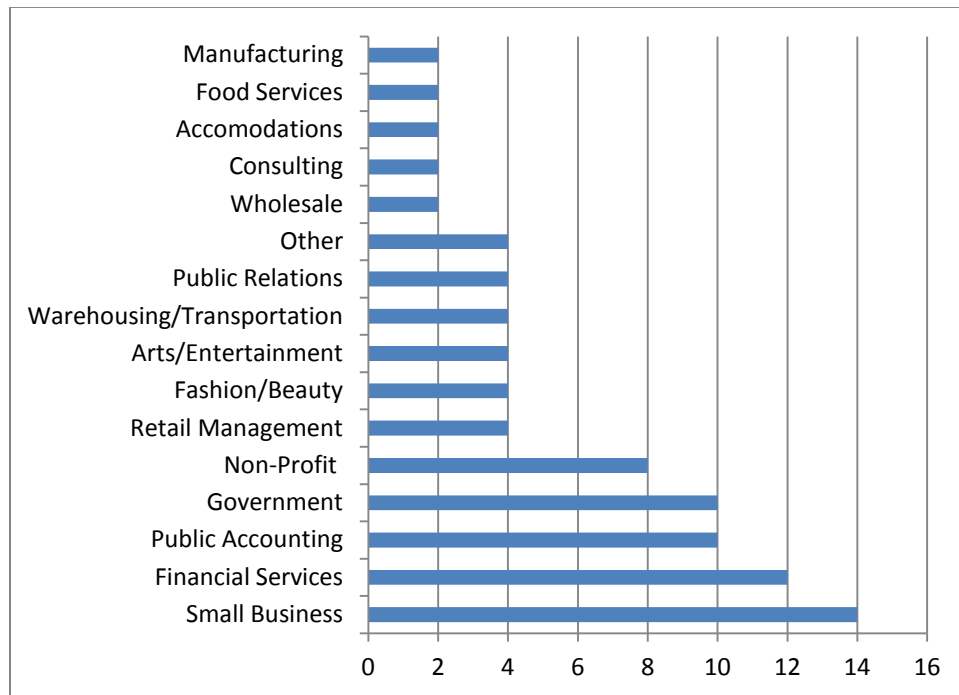
- Both the employer ratings and alumni ratings showed that the 5 skills adopted as School of Business learning skills were important for hiring and for success on the job.
- In addition, employers identified a number of other important skills: oral communication, teamwork/collaboration, and organization/time management
- Functional knowledge, while rated by both employers and alumni as important, was not rated as important as soft skills
- Alumni ratings varied significantly from employer ratings. Alumni in the early stages of their career appeared to undervalue many of the skills that employers believed were important. This was particularly evident for oral and written communications and presentations. In contrast, alumni tended to overvalue quantitative analysis, functional knowledge, and technology proficiency/
- For 11 skills, alumni believed their education did not adequately prepare them with the skills important for their success on the job.
- For two skills, alumni believed that their education had prepared them adequately for effective performance on their job.

PROCEDURE: EMPLOYER SURVEYS

Employers were asked to rate the importance of 17 specific skills to their decisions to hire entry-level employees on a 5-point Likert scale where 5 = very important and 1= Not important.

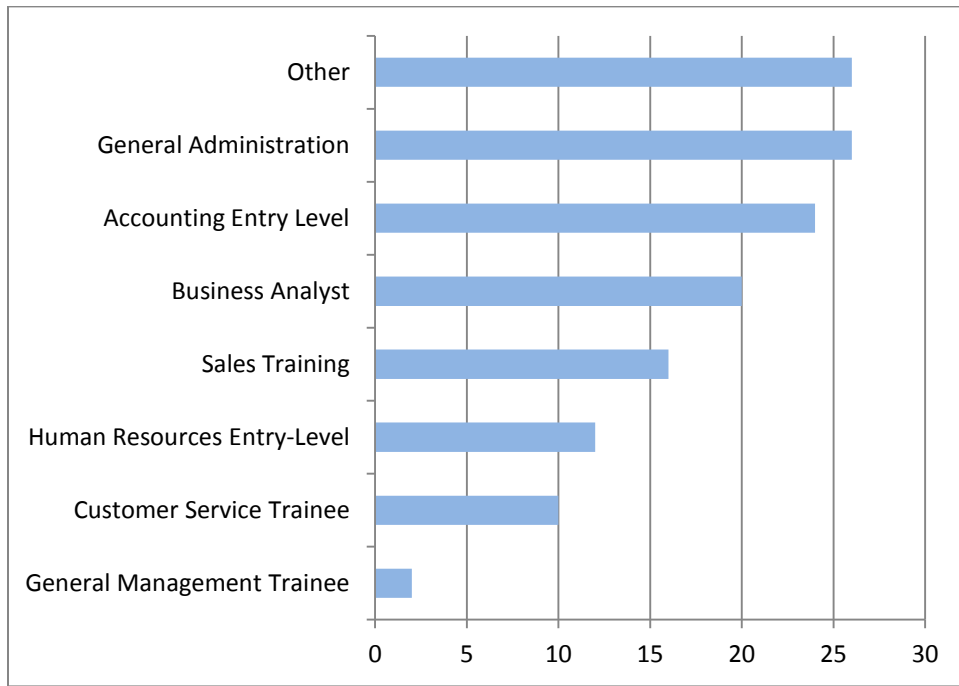
Approximately 1200 surveys were emailed to employers identified by the Magner Center as having notified them of internships or interviewed Brooklyn College graduates for internships or permanent employment during the prior 3 years. We received 74 responses.

Type of Business

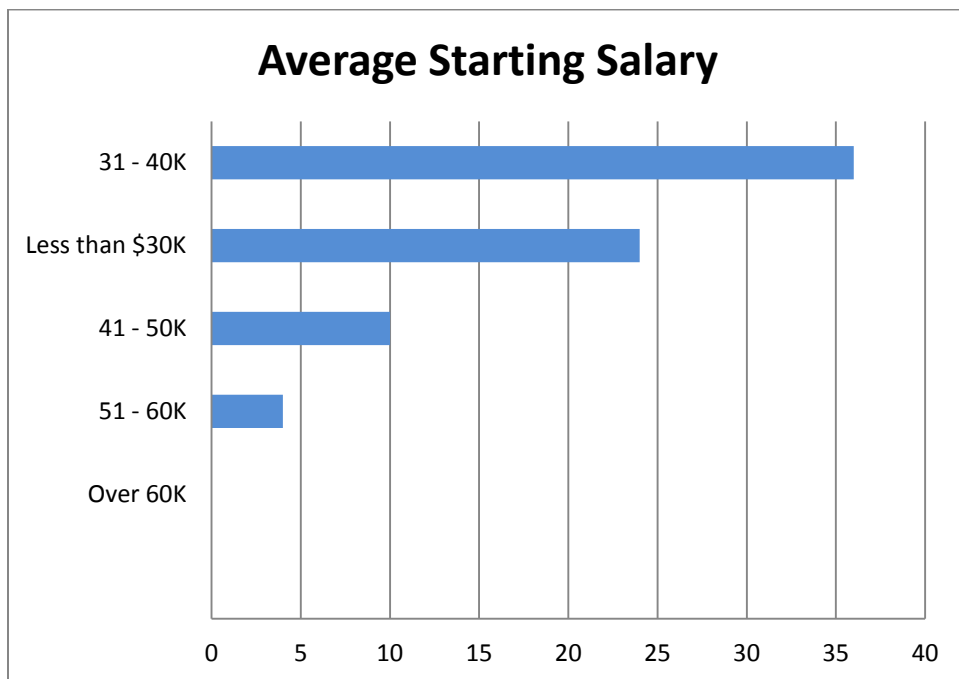


Note: There are more than 74 responses as all 14 small businesses also indicated they fit an industry category. The 14 were classified by their industry category for the following analyses.

Entry Positions for New Hires



Starting Salaries for New Hires



Employers Ratings of Importance of Skills for Entry-Level Hires



Employers' Ratings of the Importance of the 17 Skill Sets

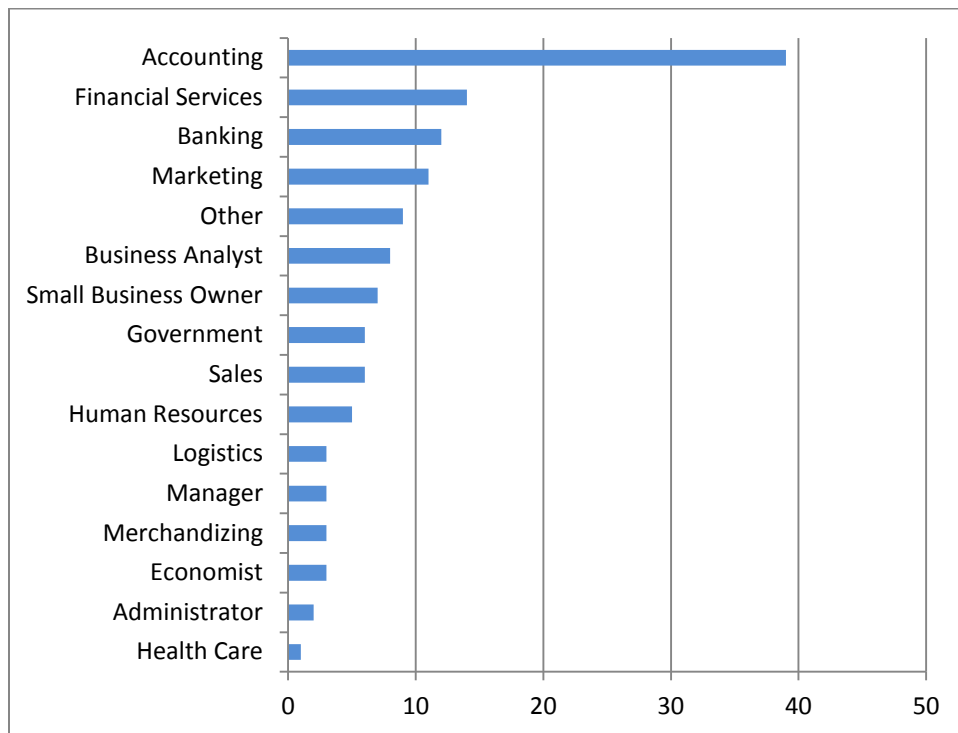
- All 17 of the skills were rated "important". The average rating across the 17 skills was 4.00.
- Written communication and oral communication were rated the most important of the skills, with an average rating of 4.54 for each.
- All 5 of the adopted School of Business learning goals (written communication, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, information literacy, and quantitative literacy) were rated as important.
- Three skills that were not adopted as school learning goals were rated as very important. These are oral communication, organization/time management, and teamwork/collaborative work.

PROCEDURE; ALUMNI SURVEY

To further augment the findings from the employer survey, an independent survey of alumni was conducted that asked them to rate the importance of 13 skills* to their effectiveness on their job. They were also asked to rate the degree to which their education in the School of Business prepared them in each of the 13 skills. The survey was emailed to School of Business alumni that graduated in the period 2012 – 2014.

One hundred and thirty two surveys were returned. All respondents graduated in 2012, 2013, or 2014. The survey asked that students only respond if they were currently working in a fulltime position related to their degree.

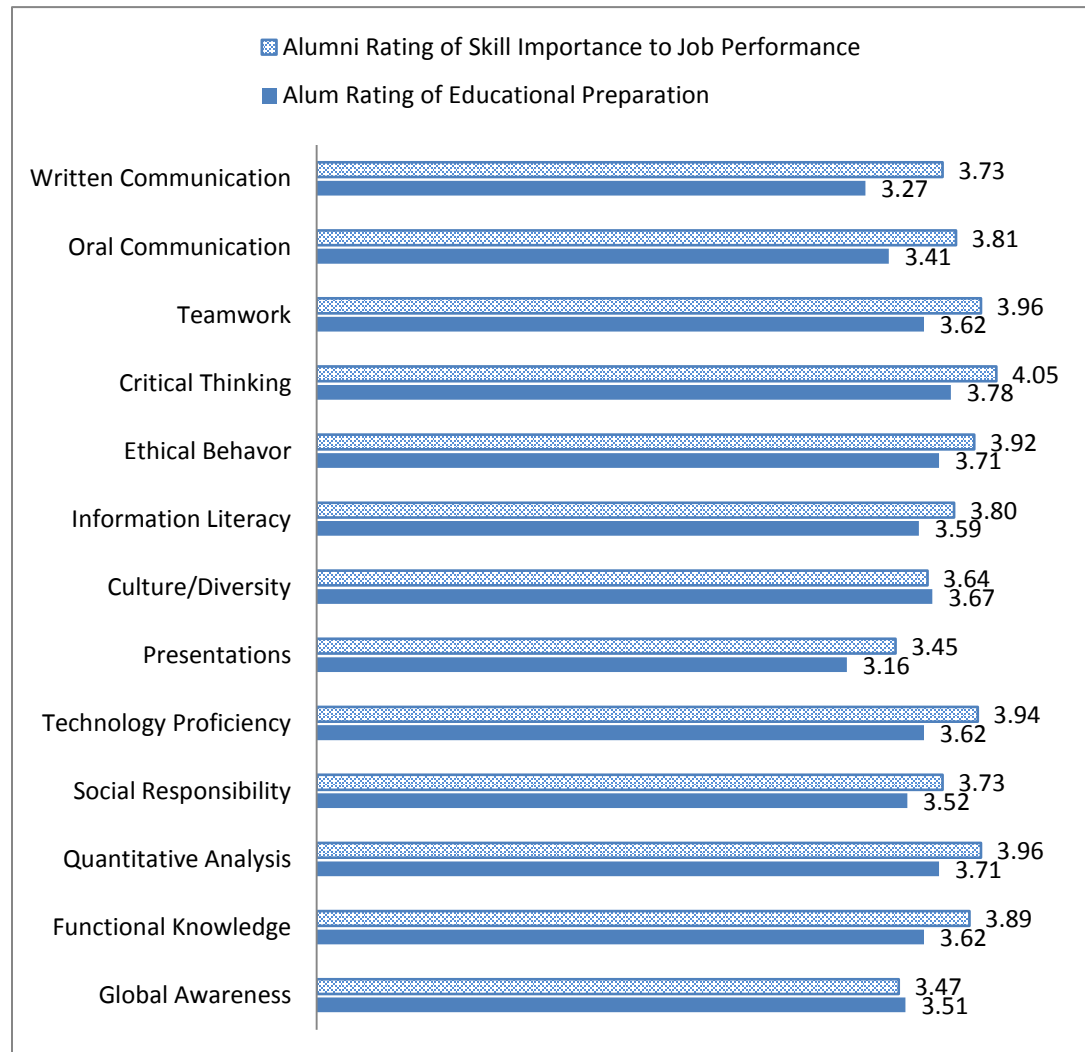
Alumni Position in Current Job



* There were only 13 skills included in the alumni survey. *Organization/time management and creative thinking* were recommended for inclusion by faculty after it was administered. In addition, the employer survey included three more specific items (i.e., broad software skills, specific software skills, and digital networking skills) to represent technology proficiency.

Comparison of Alumni Ratings of Skill Importance on the Job with Alumni Ratings of Education Preparedness

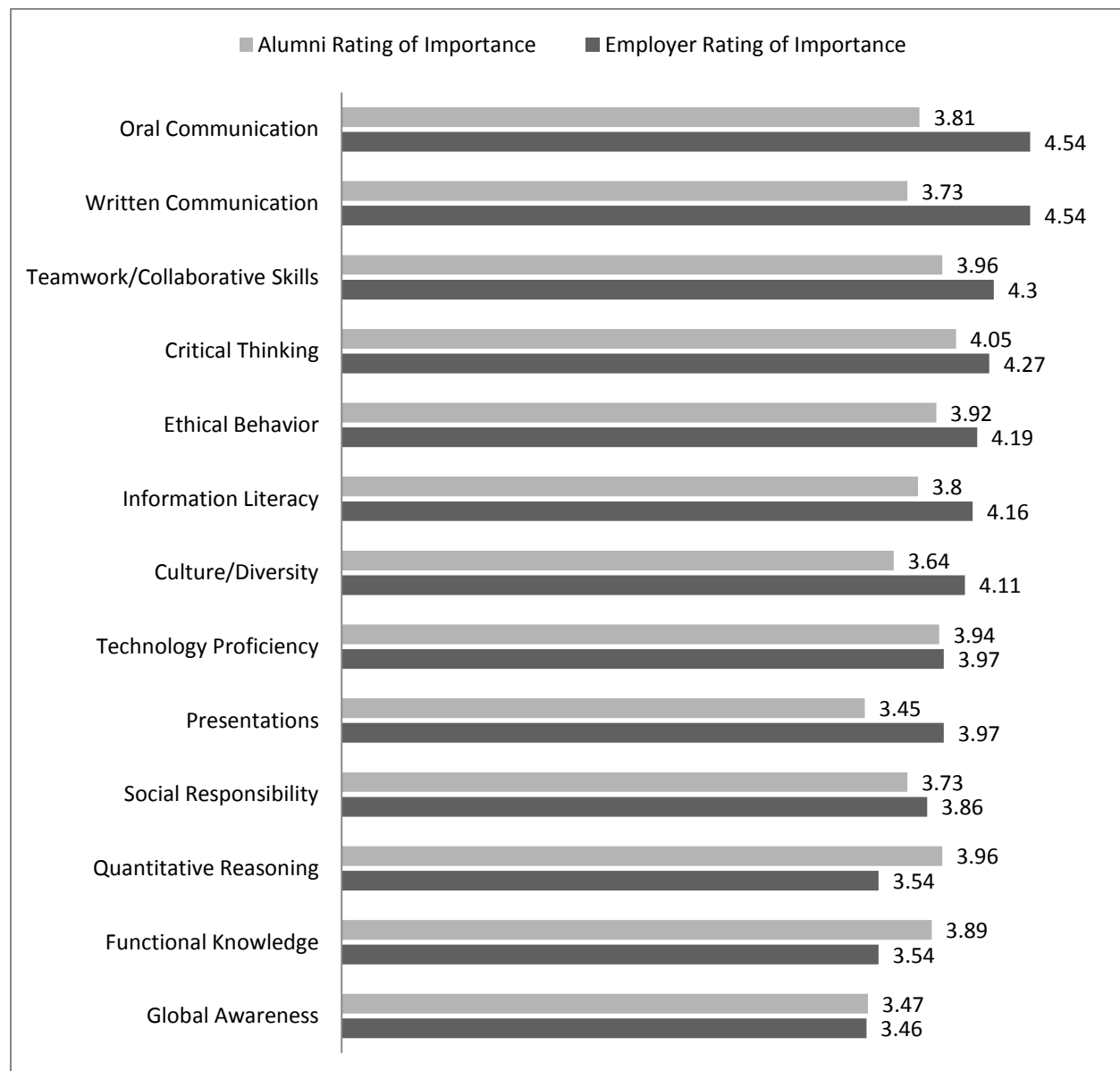
- All 13 of the skills were identified as important by the alumni. The average rating was 3.70.
- Alumni rated their educational preparedness in a skill lower than the importance of the skill for adequate performance on the job for 11 of 13 skills.
- Alumni rated their culture/diversity and their global awareness preparation at the same level as their rating of the importance of the skill to job effectiveness.



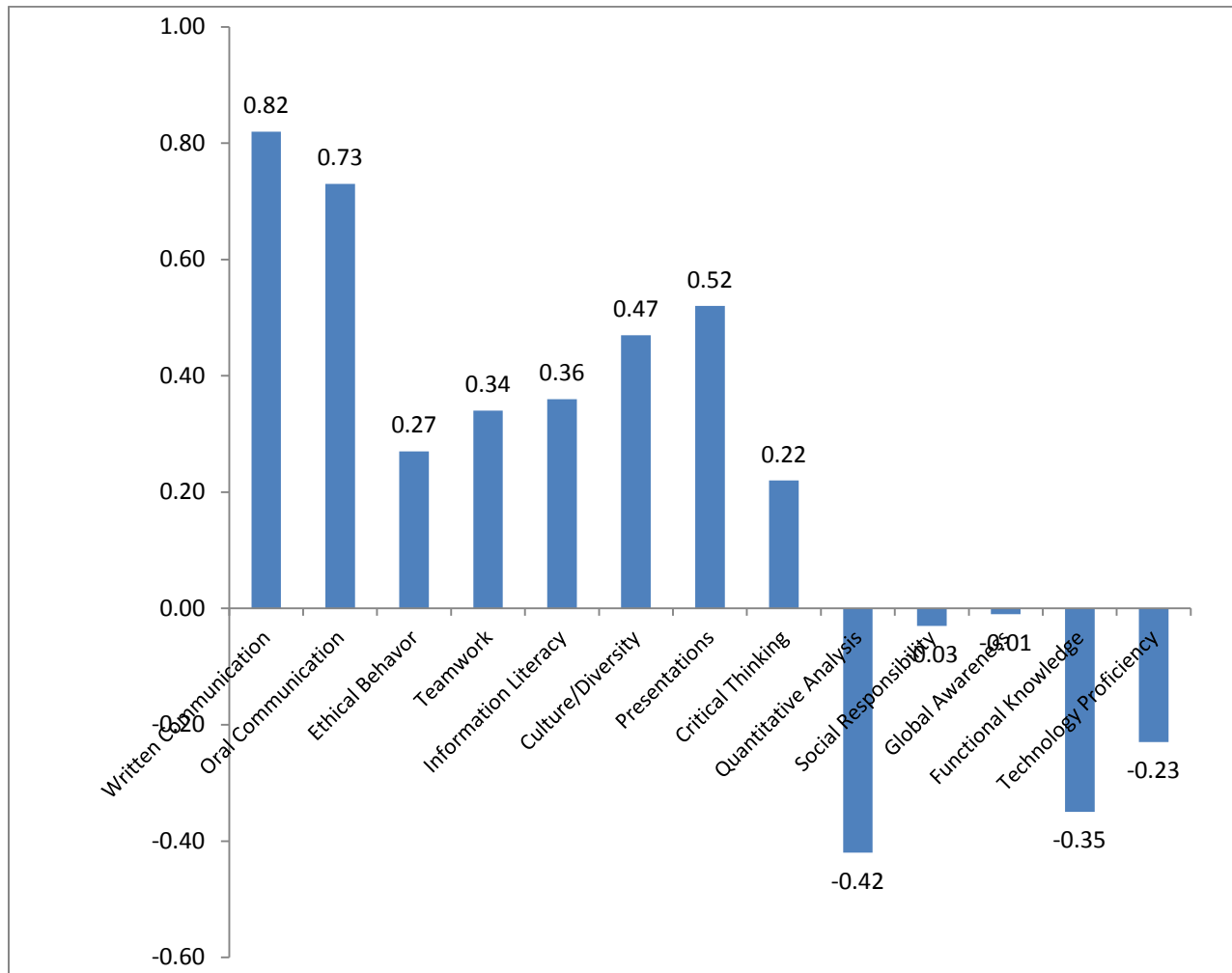
- Similar to the employers' ratings, teamwork/collaborative work, which was not adopted as a school learning goal, was rated as very important by the alumni.
- In contrast to the employer ratings, critical thinking was rated the most important skill, with an average rating of 4.06, and written communication was rated significantly lower in terms of importance. The average rating was 3.73.

Employer Rating of Skill Importance compared with Alumni Rating of Skill Importance

- Employer ratings of importance were significantly higher than alumni ratings of importance for oral communication, written communication, teamwork/collaborative skills, critical thinking, ethical behavior, information literacy, culture/diversity, and presentations.
- Employer ratings of importance were significantly lower than alumni ratings of importance for quantitative reasoning and functional knowledge.
- Differences between employer ratings and alumni ratings of importance for technology proficiency, social responsibility, and global awareness were bit significant.



GAP between Average Employer and Alumni Ratings of Skill Importance



CAVEATS IN INTERPRETATION

There are a number of important caveats in interpreting the data. Of particular concern, the small number of responses from employers made it unlikely that significant differences could be found in skills across industry/business sectors. At minimum, we expected that functional knowledge would be more critical in the accounting sector than in others. But, statistical tests did not support this.

Despite the concern with sample size, the study does provide evidence that the learning goals adopted by the School of Business in spring 2014 are appropriate given employers' expectations of new hires and alumni perceptions of skill importance in the first two years of professional employment. It also suggests that three other learning goals are important – oral communication, organization/time management, and teamwork.

Alumni ratings varied significantly from employer ratings. Alumni in the early stages of their career appeared to undervalue many of the skills that employers believed were important for new hires. This was particularly evident for oral and written communications and presentations. In contrast, alumni tended to overvalue quantitative analysis, functional knowledge, and technology proficiency.

Perhaps the most important finding in this study is that alumni one to two years out of school do not think they were as prepared as they might have been in the most important skill areas. This suggests the curriculum committees need to carefully evaluate the learning opportunities provided through assignments to support School of Business learning goals.