



Career Competencies Survey Executive Summary

Survey

The Career Competencies Survey was conducted by Career and Employment Services (CES) during the fall 2005, spring 2006, and fall 2006 semesters. The survey was conducted electronically and was sent to all employers who participate in CES career fairs and on-campus recruiting. Seventy-five (75) employers attempted the survey. Seventy-two (72) usable surveys were completed and submitted. Three (3) unusable results were received.

Recruiting Practices

In addition to asking about competencies sought, the survey also asked about recruiting practices. The majority of employers (30.5%) reported that they recruit 50 or more candidates per year. The most common methods of recruiting candidates were university career/internship fairs (77.7%), on campus interviews (65.2%), and Internet job postings (56.9%).

Level of career/internship fair participation varied widely among companies. Twenty-three (23) companies reported that they participate in less than five fairs per year; 20 companies indicated that they participate in 5-10 fairs per year; 18 companies reported that they do not participate in career fairs. Of the remaining respondents, 7 companies indicated that they participate in 11-20 fairs per year and 4 indicated that they participate in 20 or more fairs per year.

The most important factor influencing employers' decisions to participate in career/internship fairs is the previous success of graduates in the company. The next most important factor was the reputation of the college/university hosting the fair. Degree programs represented at the fair and the number of students attending were also important factors influencing companies' decisions to attend. Cost was the least important factor.

Similarly, participation in on campus recruiting also varied widely. Twenty-eight (28) employers participate in less than 5 recruiting visits per year; 15 employers indicated that they do not participate in on campus recruiting; and 13 indicated that they participate in 5-10 visits per year. Of the remaining respondents, 9 employers indicated that they participate in 11-20 on campus recruiting visits per year and 7 employers reported that they participate in 20 or more campus recruiting visits per year.

Once again, the previous success of graduates in the company was the most important factor in making the decision to participate in campus interviews. The reputation of the college/university was the second most important factor. The degree programs represented through the on campus interview schedule was also important, as was the number of students signed up on the interview schedule. As with career fairs, the cost of the on campus recruiting visit was the least important factor.

Employers were asked to identify the most important factors in choosing candidates for internship/employment during the interview. The most important factor, identified by 65 employers, was verbal communication skills. The second most important factor, identified by 60 employers, was professional appearance. Academic preparation was sixth on the list; with only 37 employers indicating that is one of the most important factors in selecting a candidate during the interview.

Employer Perceptions of CES Performance

When asked to compare CES at the University of Memphis with other career centers they visited, 67 employers indicated that CES compared favorably with other career centers.

Career Competencies

Employer rankings of career competencies returned the following results:

1. Interpersonal Skills
2. Communication Skills
3. Self Management
4. Critical Thinking Skills
5. Leadership Skills
6. Technical Skills

However, when employers were asked to rate University of Memphis students on career competencies, the following rankings were obtained:

1. Self Management
2. Technical Skills
3. Interpersonal Skills
4. Communication Skills
5. Critical Thinking Skills
6. Leadership Skills

These results support anecdotal reports that the interpersonal and communication skills of University of Memphis students are not as strong as employer wish them to be.

In ranking the career building skills of University of Memphis students, the majority of employers ranked student resume preparation, interview skills, academic preparation, and professional appearance as “Good.”

The majority of employers rated University of Memphis students as “Average” with regard to participating in co-curricular activities, internship/co-op experience, and networking skills. These results also support anecdotal reports that University of Memphis students are not as competitive as students at other universities in terms of participation in co-curricular activities, internship/co-op experience, and networking skills.

Conclusion

Data on recruiting practices will be taken into consideration when planning employer activities. Data on career competencies should be used across University Divisions to enhance the performance of University of Memphis students in the areas of communication skills, interpersonal skills, networking skills, internship/co-op experience, and participation in co-curricular activities.